THE PRINCIPLES OF NATURAL AND REVEALED RELIGION OCCASIONALLY OPENED AND EXPLAINED; IN A Course of SERMONS Preached before the HONOURABLE SOCIETY OF LINCOLN'S INN.

K

By the Rev. Mr. WARBURTON, Preacher to the SOCIETY.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

To the Worſhipful the

Maſters of the Bench

OF

The Honourable Society

OF

LINCOLN'S INN.

THE following Diſcourſes were preached, and are now publiſhed, with a view of vindicating Religion from the inſults of Libertines, and the indiſcretions of Enthuſiaſts. Nor will ſo fair a purpoſe be at all ſullied by the motive I had for this addreſs: which was, only to acknowledge, in the moſt grateful manner I was able, my obligations to the Bench for the honour done me, at the laſt vacancy, in the generous offer of the Preacherſhip of the Society; as well as for Your conſtant civilities to me ever ſince I was honoured with the charge. Theſe Diſcourſes, therefore, ſuch as they are, are humbly offered to You, by,

GENTLEMEN,

Your moſt obliged and faithful Servant,

Lincoln's Inn, Nov. 28, 1752.

W. WARBURTON.

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SERMON I.

The Nature and Condition of TRUTH.

JOHN xviii. v. 38.

Pilate ſaith unto him, What is TRUTH? *and when he had ſaid this, he went out again.*

THE bleſſed Jeſus was had before Pilate as a criminal of State: and the Governor began to queſtion him upon that footing. But when he found the kingdom, which this ſuppoſed Criminal was accuſed of claiming, was one merely ſpiritual, or, in Pilate's conception, a kingdom only in idea, he conſidered Jeſus as no proper ſubject of his animadverſion. And ſo far he acted as became his public character. SERM. I.

But his incurioſity or indifference, when TRUTH was offered to be laid before him as a private man, and by one who, he knew, had the repute of exerciſing every ſpiritual power neceſſary to inforce it, ſhews him in a light much leſs excuſable. The negligent air of his inſulting queſtion will hardly admit of an apology. "You tell me, ſays he, of Truth: a word in the mouth of every Sectary, who all agree to give that name to their own opinions. While Truth, if indeed we allow

SERM. I. its exiſtence, ſtill wanders at large, and unacknowledged. Nor does it ſeem worth while to realize and fix her abode: for thoſe things which Nature intended for general uſe, are plain and obvious, and within the reach of every man."

Sentiments like theſe characteriſed the ruler of an Aſiatic province, who had heard ſo much of Truth in the ſchools of philoſophy, and to ſo little purpoſe. Pilate, therefore, finding a Jewiſh Sage talk of *bearing witneſs to the truth*, the pretended office of the Grecian Sophiſts, concluded him to be one of their mimic Followers. For it was now become faſhionable amongſt the learned Jews to inliſt themſelves into one or other of thoſe ſchools. Thus the famous Philo was an outrageous Platoniſt: and Jeſus calling himſelf a KING, this, and what was generally known of the purity and ſeverity of his morals, probably made Pilate conſider him as one of the STOICAL WISE MEN, who alone was free, happy, and a King.

Liber, honoratus, pulcher, Rex denique Regum.

Now, as on the one hand, the character of the greek philoſophy, which was abſtracted and ſequeſtered from civil buſineſs, made Pilate conclude, that the miniſtry of Jeſus had nothing dangerous or alarming; ſo on the other, its endleſs enquiries and quarrels about TRUTH, and which of the Sects had it in keeping, made men of the world, and eſpecially thoſe whoſe practice declined the teſt of any moral ſyſtem whatſoever, willing to be perſuaded, and ready to conclude, that this boaſted Truth, which pretended to regulate and direct human conduct, was indeed no better than a fanciful and ſhifting viſion.

This,

This, I preſume, was the light in which Pilate conſidered the Saviour of the world. Had he ſuſpected Jeſus for the founder of a public Religion, to be erected on the deſtruction of the eſtabliſhed worſhip of the Empire, the jealouſies of the roman Court, ſince the change of the Conſtitution, had doubtleſs made this ſervile miniſter of power very attentive and officious to ſuppreſs it in its birth. SERM. I.

But a Religion, whoſe object was the TRUTH, was at this time ſo unknown a thing, that a pagan Magiſtrate could have no conception of it, but as of a new ſect of philoſophy. All the Religions then in credit had for their object, inſtead of Truth, public utility; and for their means, inſtead of Creeds and formulas of faith, only pompous rites and ceremonies. So that if this corrupt Politician did, indeed, regard the doctrine of Jeſus as a new Religion, it was ſuch a one as ſome modern Stateſmen have been ſaid to form of it; a ſort of *divine philoſophy in the mind*; from which, it is true, the governments and politics of this world have little to apprehend. For it was not till Paul *reaſoned of righteouſneſs, temperance, and judgment to come*, that *Felix* trembled. And had the Goſpel, at this time, been repreſented to Pilate on its practical ſide, it is probable that he, as any other Stateſman, had been in the ſame condition. But ſuch can hear talk of the TRUTHS of God unmoved and unimproved, who tremble at his judgments, and anticipate the terrors of his vengeance.

But if the ill uſage of Truth by the Philoſophers could ſo diſguſt the Politician of old, as to make

SERM. I. him indifferent to an acquaintance of this importance, What, muſt we think, will be her treatment amongſt modern Stateſmen, whoſe views are neither more pure nor more generous; and whoſe penetration, perhaps, does not go much beyond the buſy men of antiquity; when they ſee her ſo freely handled by thoſe amongſt us, who call themſelves her Miniſters, and profeſs to conſecrate her to the ſervice of Religion? Amongſt ſuch, I mean amongſt the active, no leſs than amongſt the idle part of the faſhionable world, Pilate's queſtion is become proverbial, when they would inſinuate that TRUTH, like VIRTUE, is nothing but a NAME.

"What is this TRUTH, ſay they, of which the world has heard ſo much talk, and hath received ſo little information? You boaſt of it, as the Guide of life, yet ſtill its reſidence remains unknown. Which would tempt one to ſuſpect, that either there is no ſuch thing; a thing eſſentially different from falſehood; or that its nature is too fine and ſubtile for the groſſer intellect of man to comprehend. But above all, what is that GOSPEL TRUTH, which its Miniſters, in their very attempts to recommend, are wont ſo much to diſcredit and abuſe? We do not mean that dim Spectre or Phantaſm of it, which hath ſo long haunted and poſſeſſed the Schools; but, that which you call, its brighteſt Subſtance, as it ſits inthroned in the hearts of the Faithful. How miſerably is this ſhaken, not only by the diſſentions of its Friends, but by every the ſlighteſt effort of its Enemies! And while objections to Religion lye plain and level to the capacities of the vulgar; the

ſolution

ſolution of them requires the utmoſt ſtretch of parts and learning to excogitate; and equal application and attention to comprehend. From all this (ſay they) we are naturally led to conclude, That the Goſpel-doctrines are no truths; or at leaſt truths of no general concern; ſince they are neither uniformly held by thoſe who are employed to teach them; nor ſubject to the examination of ſuch as are enjoined to receive them."

SERM. I.

Something like this, I apprehend, may be the private ſentiment of thoſe who have more decently diſcarded all care and concern about the things of religion.

And as it cannot be denied but that men's acquired paſſions and appetites have concurred with the conſtitutional weakneſs of human nature to form theſe concluſions againſt Truth; and eſpecially that beſt part of truth, Religion; Charity ſeems to call upon us to detect and lay open the general cauſes which have given birth to men's prejudices againſt both.

I. And firſt, with regard to Truth in the abſtract; the various hindrances to its diſcovery; and men's backwardneſs to acquieſce in it, when found.

The principal and ſureſt ſtep towards the poſſeſſion of the Good we ſeek, is our love and affection for the object. This quickens our induſtry, and ſharpens our attention. So that the LOVE OF TRUTH hath been always recommended by the Maſters of wiſdom as the beſt means of ſucceeding in the purſuit of it. There is hardly any one who ſuſpects he wants this LOVE: and yet, How few are there whom their confidence does not deceive!

SERM. I. deceive! We miſtake the love of our opinions for the love of Truth, becauſe we ſuppoſe our own opinions true: and yet, for the moſt part, they have been received upon credit; and conſequently are much more likely to be falſe. Hence, this imaginary love of Truth proves, in fact, little better than the love of Error: And the affections, being now miſplaced, they are a greater impediment to us in the purſuit of Truth than if we had no affections at all concerning it.

How then ſhall we know when we have this love? for ſtill it is neceſſary we ſhould have it, if we would follow Truth to any good purpoſe. It is difficult to deſcribe what every man muſt feel for himſelf; and yet as dangerous to truſt only to our feelings, when the object is ſo eaſily miſtaken. However, When we ſet out in ſearch of Truth as of a ſtranger, and not in ſearch of arguments to ſupport our familiar opinions; when we poſſeſs our ſelves in a perfect indifference for every thing but known and atteſted Truth; totally regardleſs of the place from whence it comes, or of that to which it ſeems to tend; when the mind, I ſay, is in this ſituation, no one, I think, can fairly diſpute the reality of its attachment.

1. But our appetites rarely ſuffer us to obſerve this ſtrict and rigid conduct. We ſeek the gratification of our humour even in the laws which ſhould correct it. Hence ſo many various SYSTEMS OF MORALITY, to ſuit every man's proper frame of mind, and bent of conſtitution. The indolent, the active, the ſanguine, the flegmatic, and ſaturnine, have all their correſpondent Theories. Now, inquirers of this turn, muſt needs be

be admirably qualified for the diſcovery of Truth! While juſt as one or other of the complexions carries him, the man is drawn by a ſtrong, though hidden impulſe, into the very centre of his congenial ſyſtem. And what will be the iſſue? His concern, from henceforth, is not the tryal, but the ſupport of his opinions; which can be no otherwiſe provided for than by keeping the arguments in favour of them always in view, and by ſtriving to forget whatever ſeems to have a leſs indulgent aſpect. SERM. I.

2. Prejudices miſlead the inquirer no leſs than his paſſions. He venerates the Notions he received from his forefathers: He reſts in them, upon the authority of ſuch whoſe judgment he eſteems; or, at leaſt, wiſhes them well, for the ſake of the honours and profits he ſees attached to the profeſſion of them. Nay, he can perſuade himſelf to patronize what he has once choſen, for reaſons ſtill more remote from the concluſions of common ſenſe. He likes them becauſe they are old; becauſe they are new; for being plain and ſimple; for being ſublime and myſterious; for being followed by the Few; for being followed by the Many; in a word, on a thouſand other accounts, with which Truth hath no manner of concern. But this muſt never be forgotten, that, let Prejudice drive from what quarter it will, it is ſure to make ſhipwreck of the Underſtanding, thus flattered and betrayed.

But then bad as this is, Since this too is certainly the caſe, that the impediments in the purſuit of Truth are not eſſential but accidental; we may well account for our miſtakes in ſetting out, the

SERM. I. slowneſs of our advance, and the rubs and oppoſitions in our paſſage, without having recourſe to any ſceptical concluſions in favour of the incomprehenſible nature of Truth, or the inacceſſible ſituation in which the eternal Author of all things hath placed her. For is this any reaſon, that becauſe ſome Truths are ſo deep that our haſte and impatience will not ſuffer us to ſound them; others ſo diſguiſed that our diſſipation will not allow us the attention neceſſary to diſcover them; and others again ſo ſuſpected that our prejudices diſpoſe us to reject them; That becauſe ſome errors are repreſented ſo plauſibly as to look like Truth; others ſeem ſo commodious as to be wiſhed Truth; and others again appear ſo faſhionable as to uſurp all the prerogatives due unto it; Is this, I ſay any reaſon for ſober men to conclude, that either there is no difference between what We call Truth and Falſehood; or that the difference is ſo inſenſible that it will not ſerve us for a diſtinction? Our very Senſes, in many caſes, or Reaſon in more, and our Hearts in almoſt all, will convince us of the contrary.

II. We come next to conſider the objections to RELIGIOUS TRUTH.

1. And firſt, with regard to the Miniſters of Religion, their paſſions and their prejudices. It is rather to be lamented than objected to us, that conſecration to the ſervice of heaven will not exempt good men from the frailties of humanity. As to the bad, indeed, if it does not aggravate their crimes, at leaſt it renders them more ſcandalous: And, in general, when the matter is of high concernment, the paſſions both of good and bad

bad are always, from the common impotence of our nature, proportionably inflamed. Miſtaken conſtancy, or irregular zeal, makes this man tenacious of received opinions: And the obliquer affections of avarice or ambition make that man reverence ſuch as are eſtabliſhed. Oppoſition, likewiſe, will make both but too much diſpoſed to obtrude what they ſuſpect to be falſe; and to ſecrete what they know to be true. This draws them ſtill further from the road of Truth, while all they ſeek is to be at diſtance from one another's Parties and Opinions. So long, therefore, as theſe intereſts prevail, the plaineſt Truths will be diſputed, and the moſt notorious Errors patronized and ſupported; the obſcureſt Principles preferred to the cleareſt, and the ſubtileſt concluſions take place of the moſt ſimple. SERM. I.

2. Inveterate errors concerning the nature and end of God's WRITTEN WORD, errors long ſince ſanctified by time and authority, are another ſource of thoſe diſgraces to which Revelation is become ſubject. The Goſpel is ſo commonly honoured with the name of TRUTH; and holy Scripture in general ſo frequently recommended for its capacity of *leading us into all truth*, that men have been apt to regard it as a treaſury of Science; and to apply to their Bible for all the principles of human knowledge. And under this deluſion, the vain inquirer, to cover the diſhonour of a fruitleſs ſearch, hath always had recourſe to that exhauſtleſs fund, the human Imagination; which is ever then moſt extravagant when Reaſon is at greateſt diſtance. How miſerably, for inſtance, hath the Moſaic account of the Creation been diſ-

honoured

SERM. I. honoured by the wild and jarring expoſitions of men devoted to this or that ſect of PHILOSOPHY or MYSTICISM? Platoniſts, Materialiſts, Carteſians, Chemiſts, Cabaliſts, and all the impure fry of phyſical, philological, and ſpiritual Enthuſiaſts, have found their peculiar whimſies ſupported, and made authentic, in the firſt and ſecond chapters of the book of GENESIS?

How, again, have the Jewiſh LAW and the GOSPEL of Jeſus been abuſed by Slaves and Rebels; or by ſuch as were ready to become either; to find, in one, the DIVINE RIGHT OF KINGS; and, in the other, the Supremacy and DOMINION OF THE CHURCH?

But amidſt all the folly and miſchief attending this perverſion of the Bible, in ſupport of human ſyſtems of Philoſophy and Politics, had men only reflected, that, though Scripture be ſaid to be *written to make us wiſe*, it is added — *unto ſalvation*; [a] they would have ſought for the principles of natural and civil knowledge amongſt their proper Profeſſors; and have ſtudied Scripture only to inveſtigate that *wiſdom which is from above*, and *is firſt* PURE, *then* PEACEABLE [b]: A wiſdom, which, at the ſame time that it inlightens the Judgment, rectifies the Heart; and ſo takes away all ground of contention both from a perplexed head and a bigotted temper.

III. But the thing which, moſt of all other, indiſpoſes ſceptical men to the truths of Revelation is, "That the ſmall remain of SCRIPTURE-TRUTH which the friends and miniſters of Re-

[a] 2 Tim. chap. iii. 15. [b] Jam. chap. iii. 17.

ligion

ligion have left unimpared, lies a prey to its ene- SERM.
mies; obvious, (they ſay,) to a thouſand objecti- I.
ons; and every objection level to the capacity of the Vulgar: while the ſolution of them not only requires the beſt abilities to frame and draw out, but the cloſeſt attention likewiſe to comprehend."

Now, as this is ſuppoſed to effect both the nature of Truth in general, and the character of the Goſpel in particular, we ſhall conſider it in either light.

1. All objections to Truth muſt needs be founded in falſe judgment: Falſe judgment proceeds from ignorance, or a ſuperficial view of things: But this ignorance is the proper allotment of the Vulgar: So that, what ariſes from thence, as referring to, and conſonant with their capacities, cannot but make a quick and eaſy impreſſion. On the contrary, the ſolution of theſe difficulties muſt needs be formed on a true judgment of things. This judgment ſprings from a profound view of Nature. But ſuch a view requires a large detail: and the mutual connections and dependencies of things, a ſtrict examination: hence the neceſſity of time to acquire, and of attention to comprehend. Theſe different properties in OBJECTIONS and SOLUTIONS are ſo conſtant and notorious, that the eaſe of queſtioning fooliſhly, and the difficulty of anſwering wiſely, is become proverbial.

Hence we collect, that even admitting Revelation to be true, it would be neceſſarily attended with the diſadvantages here objected to it.

2. In vindication of the character of the GOSPEL it may be replied, That it is one thing to underſtand

SERM. I. derſtand the meaning of a truth delivered in a propoſition, and another, to comprehend all the reaſons on which that truth is founded. The firſt of theſe is all that is NECESSARY for man to know: For when God vouchſafed the revelation of himſelf to the world, he annexed SAVING FAITH to the knowledge and acceptance of clear and ſimple propoſitions, ſuch as theſe, that *Jeſus is the Meſſiah, the Redeemer of mankind.* They miſtake his Goſpel, and alter the terms of his Covenant, who put ſalvation upon the evidence to be given of the NECESSITY OF A SAVIOUR. The learned Divine, we preſume, is able to ſatisfy all ſerious inquirers, in both theſe particulars: But if the reaſoning which proves the latter, exceed the capacity of the mere Vulgar, it derogates nothing from Revelation; ſince the knowledge of that matter makes no part of the terms of our ſalvation. All, that man can wiſh ſhould be indulged him, in conſideration of his natural infirmities, is indulged him: For the utmoſt he could deſire is, that the Truths, which come propoſed to him from God, be plain and conſiſtent: and accompanied with Credentials from the ſender. Agreeably hereto, the fundamental doctrines, which the chriſtian religion objects to our belief, are the exiſtence of one God, the Creator; and his moral government of the world; that Jeſus is the Chriſt, the Son of God, ſent by his Father to redeem mankind from ſin and miſery, and to reſtore them to eternal life, by the ſacrifice of himſelf upon the croſs; and that the Holy Spirit is the ſanctifier and enlightener of all thoſe who *walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called.*

Pro-

Propoſitions of the utmoſt clearneſs and preciſion. Nor is the evidence of their original leſs ſimple or intelligible; ſuch as the Miracles performed, and the Propheſies fulfilled, in atteſtation of them. SERM. I.

So admirably fitted for the groſs body of mankind, is this Religion, both in its genius and promulgation! No abſurd incredibility in Nature, propoſed; no blind ſubmiſſion to Authority, required. The doctrines, as clear as they are pure, equally ſolicit the Underſtanding and Affections; and are adapted to ſatisfy the Reaſon, at the ſame time that they allure the Will. In a word, inforced with that power and conviction as makes it difficult for an ingenuous mind to reject them, tho' under cover of that civil, (but criminal) diſmiſſion of the Roman Governor.

IV. But then "If theſe fundamental articles of the Goſpel-covenant were contrived by divine Wiſdom, with ſuch ſimplicity and plainneſs, How came they, it will be aſked, to be ſo delivered as to afford occaſion for the inquiſitive to ſtart a thouſand curious queſtions, which have no other tendency than to perplex and obſcure them." To this, we beg leave to ſay, that, though, indeed, ſacred Scripture, as far as it reſpects the eſſentials of the Chriſtian faith, be exceeding clear and ſimple, yet it does, at the ſame time, contain many profound, and even impenetrable myſteries. Myſteries, however, which no leſs manifeſt the adorable wiſdom, than the open doctrines do the abounding goodneſs of our all-gracious Maſter.

The Goſpel is a Covenant or Tranſaction of God with Man. The immenſe diſtance between the Parties contracting muſt needs make the ſeveral parts

SERM. I. of the covenant very diſſimilar. So that, if from Man's nature and ſituation we may expect, that when God vouchſafes to direct us by a revelation of his WILL, all his commands will be brief, evident, and full; we muſt, on the like reaſoning, conclude from the nature of the other contracting Party, the God of the univerſe, that when he vouchſafes to inſtruct Man in the revelation of his TRUTH, there will be ſome things in the *Covenant of Grace*, which will partake of the ſublime obſcurity of its Author.

It was the ſame God who framed the Chriſtian Oeconomy and the Newtonian Syſtem. Why therefore ſhould it be matter of objection to the former, and not to the other, that there are many things ſurpaſſing human comprehenſion in both? Is the doctrine of Grace more ſtupendous than the velocity of Motion given to Light; Or is the incarnation of the Son of God more aſtoniſhing than the leaſt poſſible quantity of Matter ſufficient to make a World? If therefore the Newtonian philoſophy (which is built on Science) hath revealed and demonſtrated the powers of Nature amidſt all that darkneſs; how can we doubt of ſeeing God in his Goſpel, though ſurrounded with the impenetrable depths of infinity? In a word, I think we might as reaſonably conclude againſt the divine original of the Goſpel, if there were no traces of ſuch myſterious parts, as if there there were only ſuch. An unclouded ſplendor, and undiluted obſcurity, equally diſcrediting the Works and Diſpenſations of Heaven.

But, of the dark parts of Revelation there are two ſorts: one, which may be cleared up by the ſtudious

ſtudious application of well improved talents; the other, which will always reſide within the ſhadow of God's throne, where it would be impiety to intrude. SERM. I.

However, neither the one nor other make part of the eſſential doctrines of our Faith. The impenetrable nature of the latter totally unfits them for objects of religious belief; and the difficult comprehenſion of the former unfits them for becoming objects of the People's. But as it is this ſort only which can afford any reaſonable ground to the objection before us, we ſhall be a little more particular.

The Goſpel profeſſes itſelf to be the completion of one entire Syſtem, advancing by a gradual progreſs, through various Ages and People, from the Creation of man to his Redemption. A Diſpenſation of this character cannot but be contrived and conducted on principles of the ſublimeſt wiſdom. So that as, on the one hand, the knowledge of the relations of the parts to one another; and their various coincidencies, and mutual operations, to produce, either their diſtinct, or their united effects, will be extremely difficult; ſo, on the other, the attainment of this knowledge will be neceſſary, if we aſpire to that full and comprehenſive idea of Religion, which can alone enable us to detect and ſatisfy the doubts and cavils of Infidelity.

Now, in this conſiſts the ratio and eſſential grounds of the Goſpel-doctrine; of which, one would think, the only iſſue ſhould be credit, and glory to the chriſtian Faith. But unadviſed inquirers exploring the depths of infinite Wiſdom without modeſty and reverence, have given a handle to licentious men to turn theſe proofs, explored impro-

SERM. I. improperly, and imprudently inforced, into an argument againſt the divine original of Revelation. And this pretence making its appeal to the ignorance of the Vulgar, is greedily embraced. In the mean time, the ſolution of the cavil demanding an enlarged view of God's moral Oeconomy, acquired by the right application of general knowledge, well digeſted, we need not wonder, that a better underſtanding than commonly falls to the ſhare of the People, is required to enable us to ſee the force of ſuch reaſoning.

But is this general incapacity any real objection to the truth of our Religion? By no means. It is perfectly agreeable to our ideas of God's moral attributes that he ſhould inform men of his Will; that he ſhould deliver to them a rule of action, accompanied with the ſanctions of a Law: It is as conformable to our ideas of Man's relation to his Maker, that he ſhould receive and obſerve this Law. Reaſon, indeed, expects that the delivery of it be attended with theſe conditions, That the propoſitions in which it is contained, be clear and intelligible; the truths in which it is conveyed, agreeable to the nature of things; and the pretenſions of thoſe intruſted with its propagation, confirmed by ſuperior power. Along with this Law is proclaimed the free gift of a general bleſſing; which the Giver might beſtow at his pleaſure, as well in one reaſonable way as in another.

Has man any more to expect before he vouchſafes to accept this free bleſſing, or condeſcends to be governed by this equitable Law? Reaſon ſays, No. But Paſſion and Prejudice ſtand out. "We want, they cry, to be informed how we came to ſtand

ſtand in need of this Salvation. We want to be inſtructed in the ratio or eſſential grounds of the doctrine propounded." SERM. I.

Now if divine Wiſdom had not thought fit to comply with ſo bold and inſolent a demand, Could we accuſe him of being wanting to his favourite Man? Surely we could not. Yet God hath been graciouſly pleaſed to humour our caprice. He hath laid open the *depth and riches* of his Syſtem ſo fully, as to enable thoſe who are duly qualified with human knowledge, to ſatisfy theſe demands; and to explain the WHY of his Oeconomy of Redemption.

Will this content us? By no means. "The "ſolution, it is ſaid, is founded in ſuch princi- "ples of ſpeculative ſcience as the People can "never comprehend." But for this, there is no remedy. The fault, if there be any, lies not in the mode of the religious Diſpenſation, but in the nature of Truth itſelf: Which requires much attention of the beſt gifted and beſt improved underſtanding to penetrate to its general principles. Would you have the eternal nature of things altered to gratify your prejudices? Truth, no more than its Author, can ſink to the level of your ignorance; but You, by a proper cultivation of your reaſon, may riſe to Truth, may reach its ſublimeſt heights, its reſidence near the footſtool of the Almighty.

"This attempt, you ſay, the ſtation and condition of the people will never ſuffer them to make; they have neither leiſure to learn, nor opportunities to philoſophiſe."—Be content then with thoſe ſimple principles, and plain arguments

SERM. I. for Religion, explained above: and have the candour and honeſty to own, that, if you want knowledge to judge of the anſwers of the learned, to infidel objections; you want it equally to judge of the objections themſelves; which, therefore, ſhould never indiſpoſe you to what you do underſtand; Principles, which conſtitute thoſe eſſential articles of faith by which you muſt be ſaved. And if the higher and more intricate truths of Religion, exceed your capacity, be aſſured (if for no other reaſon than this) that you may be ſafely ignorant of them. In the concerns of life, about which men are generally more in earneſt than in the affairs of Religion, you take the concluſions of Science upon truſt, and erect them into princples: You navigate, you build, you ſtate accounts, and truſt to the mathematician for the ratio of thoſe rules by which you work and attain your purpoſe.

But to this you will ſay, "It is true, indeed, that in the common affairs of life, men go on upon truſt; but then uniform experience ſhews, they are in no danger of being deceived; for the conſtant ſucceſs attending the operations, thus conducted, aſſures them, that the rules by which they act are deduced from principles of Truth." —And is that FAITH and OBEDIENCE, which conſtitute us the Diſciples of Chriſt, leſs uniformly productive of good? Did Faith ever violate civil peace; or Obedience impair domeſtic felicity? In vain you tell us of that frantic Zeal, of that dire Superſtition, which have ſet whole Kingdoms in a flame, and deſolated private Houſes. The Firſt miſchief they always do is

to

to corrupt FAITH and OBEDIENCE: and after this, to charge upon theſe, the evils cauſed by their deſtroyers, is adding mockery to injuſtice. SERM. I.

And here let me obſerve, that the Founders of our holy Faith were in this, as in all other parts of their conduct, truly admirable. What they chiefly inſiſted on to the People at large, was the BELIEF of a few ſimple propoſitions, as neceſſary to Salvation. When they addreſſed themſelves to ſuch Particulars who were fitly qualified and rightly diſpoſed, ſuch who have heads to diſtinguiſh and hearts to chuſe the right, they as warmly recommend EXAMINATION, *to ſearch the Scriptures*, and *to try all things*. Yet the only uſe a late writer could find in ſo ſage and generous a conduct was to turn it to abuſe, in a piece of profane drollery, called *Chriſtianity not founded on argument*. An egregious exploit! and worthy the Author's charitable views: the mock conſolation of Fanatics, and the ſly merriment of Sceptics and Unbelievers.

But now, we are ſtopt ſhort and told, that all our pains might have been well ſpared: for that the neceſſity of theſe profound defences, ſo much embroiling the learned and embarraſſing the Vulgar, doth not ariſe from the nature of truth, but from the folly or knavery of its Advocates. "It "is aſtoniſhing, (ſays the Objector) how Divines "could take ſo much ſilly pains to eſtabliſh myſ- "tery on metaphyſics, revelation on philoſophy, "and matters of fact on abſtract reaſoning. A "Religion founded on the authority of a divine "Miſſion, confirmed by propheſies and miracles, "appeals to fact: and the facts muſt be proved "as all other facts, that paſs for authentic, are

SERM. I. "proved. If they are thus proved, the Religi-
"on will prevail without the aſſiſtance of ſo much
"profound reaſoning *." To which I reply, That, had this charge on the Divines been well founded, the objection would yet have been uncandid and diſingenuous. For who were they that drew the Divines into metaphyſics, philoſophy, and abſtract reaſoning, but theſe Objectors themſelves? And on what occaſion, but this?—The advocates of Revelation did not want to be told that a "Religion founded on the authority of "a divine Miſſion, and confirmed by propheſies "and miracles, appeals to facts," and was to be proved by human evidence. For in reality, by FACTS they had already proved it: And with ſuch force and Evidence, that unbelievers were driven from their Objections to the Facts, and reduced to take refuge in Philoſophy—"You preſs "us with facts (ſay they) and the teſtimony of an-"tiquity:" ſupports too ſlender to bear the unnatural load of REVELATION! A thing impoſſible in itſelf, as it oppoſes the eſtabliſhed order of Providence: A thing impoſſible under the Bible repreſentation of it, as ſeveral paſſages in that book directly oppoſe our common notions of God's Attributes."—In this ſtrait, what was to be done, but either to confeſs the force of the objection; or, by the aid of that *metaphyſics*, *philoſophy*, and *abſtract reaſoning*, which the laſt objection appeals to, and which the other condemns, to ſhew its futility and weakneſs. For the conſtitution of nature cannot be explained without metaphyſics; and the Attributes of God cannot be confronted with his ſup-

* L. B's Letters concerning the ſtudy and uſe of Hiſtory.

poſed

poſed commands, without the uſe of abſtract rea- SERM. I.
ſoning. And yet, for ſubmitting to this neceſſity, for undergoing this drudgery, the Divines are upbraided, ridiculed, and turned into contempt. And by whom? By the very men who occaſioned the diſtreſs, and defied them to get out of it.

Nor is this the worſt. The Divines are repreſented as applying their "metaphyſics, philoſophy, "and profound reaſoning, to propheſies and "miracles." How groſs the miſrepreſentation! They had more wit, they had more honeſty, (I ſpeak not here, nor does the Objector, of two or three crack-brained viſionaries) than to take ſo much *ſilly pains*. They applied this reaſoning as became them; not to matter of FACT, but of RIGHT. It was pretended, that God could not give a Revelation; that he could not ſelect a choſen People; that he could not accept a vicarious atonement. And againſt theſe bold aſſertions, the chriſtian Divine directed all the force and evidence of true Philoſophy.—With what ſucceſs the lateſt poſterity ſhall tell with gratitude.

V. But it is not only from what lies hid, but from what hath been diſcovered that the enemies of our Faith can raiſe objections to its diſcredit. If, in theſe later times, it hath been pretended, that a more rational idea of God's diſpenſations hath been propoſed; if the various genius, the comparative excellence, the mutual dependence, the reciprocal illuſtration of the ſeveral Parts, and the gradual progreſs of the Whole towards perfection, have been inveſtigated with a penetration, ſolidity, and preciſion unknown to thoſe ages which time alone hath taught us to eſteem ve-

SERM. I.

nerable; if, I ſay, this hath been pretended; We are then aſked, "How it came to paſs, that Truths, ſo ſublime and uſeful, ſhould have lain hid till now; When the light of the Spirit was ſent ſo early, and had illuminated the Church ſo long? How it came to paſs, they were denied to the beſt times; and, after a long courſe of ages, reſerved as a reward for the very worſt?"—And when they have asked this, to diſcredit OLD truths; they can, in order to increaſe the prejudices againſt them, join with bigots, how inconſiſtently ſoever, to decry the NEW.

To this objection, it is ſufficient to reply, That the promiſe and gift of the SPIRIT may be conſidered either as it concerned the firſt propagators of the Word; or as it concerned the teachers and hearers of it ever ſince. As to the immediate diſciples of Chriſt, there is no doubt of their being abundantly inlightened for the work of their miniſtry; whether it was in making converts, in founding churches, or in compoſing thoſe occaſional inſtructions, by which Chriſtians of all ages, may improve the current benefits they receive from the aſſiſtance of the ſame Spirit.—And that aſſiſtance is the ſecond point we are to conſider.

Now the endowment of Grace is, in this reſpect, juſt the ſame with every common endowment of Nature; of little advantage without our co-operation! God hath given men hands and feet, to procure good and to avert evil. But the benefit does not operate like a charm; it is to our dextrous application of the members that we owe all the advantages ariſing from their uſe. So it

is

is in the free-gift of the Spirit: It was beſtowed upon us to enlighten the Underſtanding, to aſſiſt the Judgment, and to redreſs the diſorders of the Will. But if either we refuſe to exert theſe faculties, or will direct them to improper objects, the uſe and efficacy of Grace muſt ſurely be defeated. Theſe reflections will enable us to give a reaſonable account how it might happen, that very important truths, concerning God's moral Diſpenſations, may have remained hid for ages, and yet be reſerved, (to the greater glory of his Goſpel in its greateſt need) for the diſcovery of theſe worſe and latter times. SERM. 1.

This ſuppoſed ordonance, in the œconomy of Grace, may receive credit from what is confeſſed to have happened in the œconomy of Nature.

The power, wiſdom, and goodneſs of the Author of the Syſtem to which we belong, is ſo clear and evident from every obvious configuration of Matter ſurrounding us, that it cannot eſcape the notice of the moſt inattentive, or lie concealed from the moſt ignorant. Hence a GOD, the maker, preſerver, and governor of the world, is the concurrent voice of Nature.

NOW CREATION and GOVERNMENT, from which the morality of human actions is deduced, are the great principles of NATURAL RELIGION. So that God could not be ſaid to have been wanting in the diſcovery of himſelf to the loweſt of his reaſonable creatures. Yet though the obvious marks of his Power, Wiſdom, and Goodneſs thus obtrude themſelves upon all men; it is certain, that a well directed ſtudy, in the contemplation of the great book of Nature, opens

SERM. I. to us ſuch ſtupendous wonders of his Power, ſuch awful ſcenes of his Wiſdom, and ſuch inchanting proſpects of his Goodneſs, as exceed all conception of the unlettered and uninſtructed Spectator. Some faint taſte of theſe beauties, the more Inquiſitive enjoyed very early: But their ſucceſſors, by too much indulging to SPECULATION, and allowing too little to EXPERIENCE, inſtead of finding a real, invented an infinite variety of ideal Worlds; all as diſhonourable to the Author of Nature as diſtant from his Truth. At length, men grew wiſer by the follies of thoſe who went before them; and a different method of ſtudying Nature was invented and purſued; in which Fancy was excluded, and Fact only allowed for a ſolid ground of phyſical progreſſion. From this time Science advanced; the veil of Nature was drawn aſide; and her ſacred Myſteries expoſed to the open admiration of all men.

This was the caſe in the Syſtem of Nature. The Syſtem of Grace ſeems to run exactly parallel.

The great principles of Revealed Religion are FAITH and OBEDIENCE: And theſe are clearly and fully taught in the Goſpel; and are alone ſufficient to *make men wiſe unto ſalvation*. But we ſhould greatly derogate from God's Moral government, not to ſuppoſe it abounding with the like myſterious wonders as the Natural. And to the ſtudy of theſe, there were more calls, and much better opportunities. The knowledge of God's moral Diſpenſation is the duty of every man; and more eſpecially of the Miniſters of Religion: So that partly on account of the importance of the ſubject;

ſubject; partly to enable us to oppoſe our ſelves to the malice and ſophiſtry of the enemy; but principally in obedience to the command, to *ſtudy the Scriptures*, it has, from the firſt ages of Chriſtianity down to theſe times, been one of the principal occupations of the Learned. Yet what through unfavourable circumſtances in the Civil and Literary world; what through the bias of inveterate prejudices; but above all, from the oblique intereſts and turbulent Paſſions of the inquirers themſelves, the various ſyſtems of Religion, invented by Divines, and which all pretend to find in Scripture, have diſhonoured the Redemption of mankind near as much as thoſe of the Philoſophers had diſhonoured the Creation of the univerſe: Till here, as in the other caſe, the ſame ſpirit of prudence and ſobriety, which taught men the true method of treating the Things of Nature, by a careful ſtudy of the volume of cretion, led them into the right way of treating the things of God, by a careful ſtudy of the volume of Redemption. So that if, in theſe times, the advances in the knowledge of God's WILL ſhould haply prove as conſiderable as thoſe in the diſcovery of his WORKS, it will not be beſide a reaſonable expectation; as ſimilar means are always likely to produce ſimilar effects. SERM. I.

We have placed theſe correſpondent hiſtories of the progreſs of the human mind, in NATURE and GRACE, thus near one another, that, by comparing the parts of them together in the ſame view, we may ſee whether there be any objections to the truth of new diſcoveries in religious matters that do not equally hold againſt the truth of new diſcoveries in natural; of which, for their newneſs

SERM. I. newneſs alone, no man ever yet entertained the leaſt ſuſpicion.

Firſt, then, as to God's primary diſcovery of his Nature in the great book of Creation, compared to the diſcovery of his Will in the volume of his written word, we may obſerve his goodneſs in either caſe to be equally conſpicuous. In the former, a man need but open his eyes to ſee the Divinity in every object; in the latter, he who *runs may read* the means and method of his own Salvation: In neither, is any thing wanting, that is neceſſary, to inſtruct the moſt ignorant in their dependance, and their duty. For further information in the works and ways of Providence, God wiſely reſerved it for the reward of the manly and virtuous improvement of the Underſtanding.

It is true, in fact, that throughout a vaſt ſeries of ages, neither of theſe Inquirers made any very conſiderable advances in real knowledge: but it is as true, that the impediments, in both caſes, proceeded not from any difficulties in the nature of the things inquired after, but from the wrong methods employed in the ſearch. Inſtead of endeavouring to find out the real conſtitution of things from the frame of God's works, as they are objected to our Senſes; or the nature of Revelation from the ſtudy of the word, as conveyed to us in Scripture; they invented imaginary Syſtems out of their own ſlender ſtock of Nothing; and then, by wreſting and diſtorting, forced Nature and the Bible to father this ſhadowy and ſpurious iſſue.

But

But both Divines and Philoſophers, when they became convinced of their follies, and, in conſequence of that conviction, proceeded with more modeſty, as well as better ſenſe, to renounce their fanciful Hypotheſes, and to erect Theories on the real conſtitution of things, Both, I ſay, made great advances in natural and religious truth. SERM. I.

Theſe two important ſtudies, therefore, being alike circumſtanced, and having run the ſame fortune, demand, in all reaſon, the ſame judgment to be paſſed on their pretences.

But alas! we are not accuſtomed to be thus equitable. One of the principal ſources of human errors is the drawing different concluſions from the ſame principles.

It is confeſſed, that the book of Nature is ſo plain and clear, that every ſentence names and reveals its Author: that if leſs obvious Truths have lain a long time concealed, it was men's own fault, in adhering to a perverſe method of inquiry; and that when afterwards a better was invented, and they began to apply it with more care and ſobriety, knowledge opened and enlarged itſelf proportionably: while the ſudden blaze of light which followed, was ſo far from making Truth ſuſpected, that it diſſipated all thoſe doubts which had before been held of its obſcure and equivocal nature.

But now if we turn from Phyſical to Religious inquiries, we ſhall find, that the very contrary inference hath been drawn from all the ſame circumſtances. Becauſe men had been long unſucceſsful in the diſcovery of the higher truths of Religion, not only theſe, ſo lately found and ſo difficultly

SERM. I. ficultly comprehended, but even the moſt obvious principles, early delivered and generally received, have been rendered doubtful and ſuſpected.

But there is another ſort of Men, the pretended friends indeed of Religion, who, from too great reverence for things eſtabliſhed, have joined with ſuch as have too little, in decrying all NOVELTIES in religious matters.

Theſe men abhorring the vanity to be thought wiſer than their forefathers, have in expreſs terms declared their diſpleaſure at *making* what they call, *experiments in Religion.*

Divines, it is true, have long diſputed how *experiments in Religion* ſhould be made. Some would employ Scripture alone; others were for taking in Fathers and Councils; and a third ſort for applying raillery and ridicule to the proceſs. But, till of late, every man was for ſome *experiment* or other. For what is *making experiments* but (as we have juſt ſhewn) illuſtrating Revelation by new arguments ariſing from new diſcoveries made in the order, fitneſs, and harmony of the various diſpenſations of Religion amongſt themſelves, juſt as Philoſophers (of whom the word is borrowed) unfold Nature by new diſcoveries made, from repeated trials, in the contents of bodies.

No experiments in Religion is indeed the Language of Stateſmen (for in ſome things bigotry and politics agree, as extremes run eaſily into one another by their very attempts to keep at diſtance) becauſe, according to the Politician's Creed, Religion being uſeful to the ſtate and yet only a well invented fiction, all *experiments*, that is, all enquiries

quiries into its truth, naturally tend, not to con- SERM.
firm, but to unſettle this neceſſary ſupport of civil I.
Government.

But, for one who believes Religion to come from God, to be frighted with the danger of *experiments*, is, to take his friend for his enemy, the moſt ridiculous of all panic terrors.

One might reaſonably ask ſuch a one how it comes to paſs that *experiments* of ſo ſovereign uſe in the knowledge of Nature, ſhould be calculated to make ſuch havoc in Religion? Are not both the works of God? Were not both given for Man's contemplation? Have not both, as proceeding from the common Maſter of the Univerſe, their depths and obſcurities? And doth not the unfolding the myſteries of moral government, tend equally, with the diſplaying the ſecrets of the natural, to the advancement of God's glory, and the happineſs of Man? In a word, had no experiments been made in Nature, we had ſtill ſlept in the ſhade, or wandered in the labyrinth of School Philoſophy; and had *no experiments been made in Religion* we had ſtill kept blundering on in the rugged and dark paths of School-divinity.

To end as we begun, with the inſtruction afforded by my text. What reaſon ſeems to require of us is this; That if yet we know not THE TRUTH, we ſhould ſeek it of thoſe who do: And if the plain and ſimple principles of it will not ſerve our turn, but that we will needs philoſophize, and demand a reaſon for every thing, that at leaſt we ſtay for an Anſwer; and ſtay, too, till we underſtand it, before we venture to pronounce the Religion of our country to be nothing but a mere human impoſition.

SER-

SERMON II.

GOD'S *moral Government.*

PSALM cxliv. v. 3.

Lord, what is man, that thou takeſt knowledge of him? Or the ſon of man, that thou makeſt account of him?

SERM. 2.

THUS the holy Prophet, ſeized with a ſacred horror at an UNIVERSE ſtretched out through the immenſity of boundleſs Space; and with a rapturous gratitude for that GOODNESS who has graced his favourite Man with ſo tender and ſo intimate a regard.

Meditations of this kind are, indeed, moſt obvious and affecting. The RELIGIONIST and the MAN OF THE WORLD have equally employed them to reduce Humanity to its juſt value; though for very different purpoſes; the firſt, to excite religious gratitude in others; the ſecond, to encourage himſelf in an impious NATURALISM.

When the Religioniſt compares this ſmall Spot of earth to the whole of its Syſtem; and ſees a number of primary and ſecondary planets, habitations like his own, if he may judge by probable analogy, rolling round with it, and performing their various revolutions about one central fire, the common ſource of light and warmth to all, He

is

is abaſhed at the mean and diminiſhed rank his own world bears in this ſolemn and auguſt aſſembly. SERM. 2.

When, by the aid of improved Aſtronomy, he compares this ſubaſtral oeconomy with the ſyſtems of the fixed ſtars; every one of which reigns a Sun, directing and influencing the revolutions of its attendant planets; and ſees that, as the earth is but a point compared to the orb of ſaturn, ſo the orb of ſaturn itſelf grows dimenſionleſs when compared to that vaſt extent of ſpace which the ſtellar-ſolar Syſtems poſſeſs and occupy. This Lord of the creation ſhrinks ſuddenly from his height, and mingles with the loweſt croud of unheeded and undiſtinguiſhed Beings.

But when, by the further aids of ſcience, he underſtands, that a new *Hoſt of Heaven*, too remotely ſtationed for the naked ſight to draw out and review, hath been made to iſſue into day; each of which ſhining ſtrangers is the Leader of a troop of others, whoſe borrowed luſtre, too weakly reflected, no aſſiſtance of art can bring forward: and that ſtill, when ſenſe ſtops ſhort, ſcience purſues the great diſcovery, and reaſon carries on the progreſs through the mighty regions of boundleſs ſpace; the fatigued imagination, tracing ſyſtem after ſyſtem, as they riſe to light in endleſs ſucceſſion, turns frightened back upon itſelf, and overwhelms the labouring mind with terror and aſtoniſhment: whence, it never can diſengage itſelf till it riſes on the wings of FAITH, which bear this humbled creature from himſelf, and place him before the throne of God; where he ſees the myſteries of that Providence laid open,

whoſe

SERM. 2. whoſe care and bounty ſo magnificently provides for the meaneſt of his creatures.

Thus piouſly affected is the Religioniſt with the ſacred horrors of this amazing ſcene; an univerſe ſtretched out through the wide regions of ſpace, and terminated on all ſides by the depths of infinity.

But let us turn now to the Man of the world, whom this view of things, rather DEGRADES than HUMBLES. Calmly contemplative in the chair of falſe ſcience, he derides the miſtaken gratitude of the benighted Religioniſt; a gratitude riſing not on reaſon, but on pride. "For whether, ſays he, we conſider this earth, the manſion of evil, or man its wretched inhabitant, What madneſs is it to ſuppoſe, that ſo ſordid a corner, and ſo forlorn an occupant, can be the centre of God's moral government? What but the lunacy of ſelf-love could make this ſhort-lived reptile, ſhuffled hither as it were by Fate, and precariouſly ſuſtained by Fortune, imagine himſelf the diſtinguiſhed care, and the peculiar Favorite of Heaven? As well, ſays he, might the blind inhabitants of an ant-hill, which chance had placed on the barren frontier of an extended Empire, flatter themſelves with being the firſt object of their monarch's policy, who had unpeopled thoſe mighty deſerts only to afford room and ſafety for their buſy colonies. The moſt, that reaſoning pride can tempt us to preſume is, that we may not be excluded from that general providence, governing by laws MECHANICAL, and, once for all, impreſſed on matter when it was firſt harmonized into ſyſtems. But to make God the MORAL, that is, the cloſe, the

the minute and immediate inſpector into human actions, is degrading him from that high rank in which this philoſophy of inlarged creation hath ſo fitly placed him; and returning him to the people, traveſted to the mortal ſize of local God-ſhip: under which idea, the ſuperſtitious vulgar have been always inclined to regard the Maker and Governor of the World." SERM. 2.

Thus widely diſtant are the concluſions of the philoſopher, from the ſentiments of the religious man.

But who are the inlarged thinkers, and on which ſide reaſon declares, it is the purpoſe of this diſcourſe to inquire: Where, we truſt, it will be found, that Man, notwithſtanding the vaſt diſtance between him and his Creator, is indeed the ſubject of God's MORAL government, juſt as inſtinct prompts him to hope, and religion directs him to believe.

I. If from the difference of intrinſic dignity, and native worth in the CREATURE, we can conclude aught concerning the proportioned degrees of nearneſs in which it ſtands to its Creator, we ſhall be forced to give the place of honour to MIND above MATTER.

We are dazzled with the pomp and ſplendor of a viſible Creation: and the auguſt forms of material things hinder us from diſcerning the deſpicable qualities of that ſubſtance out of which they are faſhioned. But view this ſubſtance well, and we ſhall find, that what philoſophers call the INERTNESS of Matter, a quality eſſential to it, places it in the very loweſt claſs of what we

SERM. 2. can conceive of Being. So that were it not for the virtue of ATTRACTION, a thing foreign and extrinſic to it, Matter would be totally unfit for all the known purpoſes of its Creation.

To make Matter, therefore, any way conſiderable, its accumulated bulk muſt ſupply for its inherent baſeneſs. And yet the beſt Philoſophy, proceeding on geometric principles, hath informed us, that poſſibly all the ſolid matter in the univerſe may be comprized within a narrowneſs of limit [a] ſtill more aſtoniſhing than even that immenſity through which we find it dilated and expanded.

Thus MATTER carries in it no further marks or notice of a creating Hand, than an aptitude of falling back into nothing on the withdrawing the influence of that power which brought it into being. While, on the contrary, a rational MIND preſents us with the ſtrongeſt and brighteſt image [b], it is impoſſible for a Creature to reflect of its Creator. It partakes of that divine virtue, the power of agency within itſelf. It has a capacity

[a] See Newton's *Opt.* p. 243.——Octavo Edition.—"The "Sagacity of our Author [Newton] (ſays Dr. Pemberton, "in his excellent *View*, &c.) has diſcovered a method by "which——the leaſt portion of matter may be wrought into "a body of any aſſigned dimenſions how great ſoever, and "yet the pores of that body none of them greater than any "the ſmalleſt magnitude propoſed at pleaſure; notwithſtanding which, the parts of the body ſhall ſo touch, that the "body itſelf ſhall be hard and ſolid. Which ſhews that this "whole Globe of Earth, nay all the known bodies in the "univerſe together, as far as we know, may be compounded "of no greater a portion of ſolid matter than might be reduced into a Globe of one inch only in diameter, or even "leſs." *View of Sir I. Newton's Philoſophy*, p. 355—6.

[b] Gen. ch. i. ver. 26.

of

of imagination to turn its regard from the preſent, to the paſt and future; an ability of judgment to examine and rectify the informations of ſenſe; and a freedom of Will to give morality to all its thoughts and actions. SERM. 2.

But beſides this obvious ſuperiority of Mind over Matter in the nature of their eſſences; there is as ſenſible a difference in the ends of their Creation, or in the effects produced by the exertion of their ſeveral qualities. The material world was made but for the ſake of the intellectual; and conſequently it is not to be ſuppoſed, that MORAL GOVERNMENT, which regards the end, ſhould be neglected; while NATURAL GOVERNMENT, which concerns only the means, ſhould ingroſs the whole of the Ruler's attention. With reſpect to the effects produced, mind will, here again, have the ſame advantage; moral fitneſſes having a greater intrinſic excellence than natural; for Matter being devoid of conſciouſneſs, the end of the Natural is only good effected; while the end of the Moral is good felt and enjoyed.

Mind, therefore, cannot but engage the care of Providence; which is confeſſed to ſuperintend the movements of that Matter, whoſe combinations ultimately regard only mind and Intelligence.

But what makes faſtidious reaſon ſo averſe to the idea of God's moral Government, when it ſo eaſily admits his Natural, is that in this latter caſe, ſyſtems are thought to be ſuſtained and kept in order only by the general laws of mechaniſm, impreſſed on Matter at its Creation; or by certain powers lodged within it, to mold it into form, to

SERM. 2. puſh it into motion, and to give the true bias to its operations: ſo that here, the Deity works neither immediately nor particularly, but leaves every thing to the government of thoſe general Laws, or at leaſt to the adminiſtration of that ſecondary power, or Plaſtic Nature, which ſuperintends the execution of his Laws; while he himſelf, the ſovereign Lord of Being, deſcends not from his high eſtate, nor ſuffers his ſupremacy to be degraded by a minute attendance on every particle of body; or polluted by an intimate contact with groſs impure materiality. On the other hand, they ſee, moral government muſt be conducted on different principles. For it's ſubject being free agency, and it's object the direction of the effects which ſuch an agency produceth, the attention of the Deity muſt be inſtant, immediate, and particular; the relations of Maſter and Servant, of Lord and Subject, neceſſarily implying the moſt cloſe and conſtant intimacy.

But what ſhall we ſay, if the indiſpoſition to God's moral government, on account of this difference, be a mere prejudice? An indiſpoſition not derived from Nature, but the falſe explanations of it's phænomena, obtruded on us by vain ſyſtem-makers? Indeed, this ſuppoſed diſtance and ſeparation of the great Artiſt from his Work, after having once ſet the Machine a going by the firſt impreſſion of his general Laws, is the gratuitous concluſion of a talking Philoſophy: The later, and more correct inquiries into the material ſyſtem, on the unerring experience of the

the newtonian phyſics, have clearly diſcovered, SERM. that God is intimately preſent to every particle of Matter, at every point of Space, and in every inſtance of Being. For a VIS INERTIÆ, or reſiſtance to the change of it's preſent ſtate, being an eſſential quality of Matter, and inconſiſtent with any motive, force, or power in that Subſtance, all thoſe effects commonly aſcribed to a certain eſſence reſiding in it, ſuch as gravity, attraction, elaſticity, repulſion, or whatever other tendencies to Motion are obſerved in Matter, are not powers naturally belonging to it, or what can poſſibly be made inherent in it. So that theſe qualities, without which, Matter would be utterly unfit for uſe, muſt needs be produced by the immediate influence of the firſt Cauſe, inceſſantly performing, by his almighty finger, the minuteſt office in the Material Oeconomy; working ſtill near us, round us, within us, and in every part of us. 2.

If, then, in the Natural government of the world, the immediate, the inceſſant influence of the workman on his work in general, thro' all it's ſyſtems up to the whole; and, in particular, thro' all it's leſſer portions down even to the minuteſt atom, be neceſſary to enable Matter to perform it's functions; there is no reaſon to revolt againſt that cloſe connexion neceſſarily ſuppoſed between the Creator and Creature, in God's Moral government; or to wonder that the order of Rationals ſhould be honoured with the ſame immediate preſence, the ſame degree of nearneſs and intimacy, with which the Godhead viſits the whole inanimate creation.

SERM. 2.

II. Hitherto, we have endeavoured to affirm the reality of God's Moral government here below, by conſiderations drawn from the nature of the Creature. Let us now turn to the CREATOR; and ſee if thoſe things which human reaſon diſcovers of his ATTRIBUTES, do not farther contribute to eſtabliſh this important truth.

But we have been told, and with airs of ſuperior knowledge, that theſe pretended attributes, as they are commonly ſpecified, and diſtinguiſhed into natural and moral, are a mere human fiction; invented, by aid of analogy, from the actions, paſſions, and qualities obſervable in man: And that the ſimple nature of Deity is one uniform perfection; of which, infinity being the baſe, we can have no diſtinct idea or conception.

To this, it will be ſufficient to reply, That it is indeed true, that theſe ſpecific attributes, from which we deduce all our knowledge of the Nature and Will of God, are formed on analogy, and bear relation to ourſelves. But then, we ſay, ſuch attributes are not on that account the leſs real or eſſential. The light of the SUN is not in the orb it ſelf what we ſee it in the RAINBOW. There, it is one candid, uniform, perfect blaze of glory: Here, we ſeparate its perfection, in the various attributes of red, yellow, blue, purple, and what elſe the ſubtle optician ſo nicely diſtinguiſhes. But ſtill the ſolar light is not leſs real in the rainbow, where its rays become thus untwiſted, and each differing thread

thread diſtinctly ſeen, than while they remain united and incorporated with one another, in the Sun. Juſt ſo it is with the divine Nature: It is one ſimple individual perfection in the Godhead himſelf: But when refracted and divaricated, in paſſing thro' the human Mind, it becomes Power, Juſtice, Mercy; which are all ſeparately and adequately repreſented to the Underſtanding.. SERM. 2.

I ſhall venture, therefore, to conſider the divine perfection, as thus reduced and unfolded to human contemplation, under the name of Attributes, without any fear of miſtaking ſhadows for realities.

And here, I ſay, that the Natural attributes of the Deity, conſidered as Creator and Lord (and with theſe relations only, the Religioniſt has to do) may be compriſed in thoſe of POWER and WISDOM: His Moral, in thoſe of JUSTICE and GOODNESS.

Now I hold, that tho' the idea of his natural attributes be as clear, in the abſtract, as that of his moral: yet the idea of his moral attributes is, in the concrete, more adequate than that of his natural [c].

[c] What is here ſaid may enable us to form a proper judgment of the following cenſure.—"I would not ſay, God go-"verns by a rule, that we know, or may know, as well as "he, and upon our knowledge of which he appeals to "men for the juſtice of his proceedings towards them; "which a famous Divine hath impiouſly advanced in a "pretended *Demonſtration of his being and attributes.* God "forbid! But this I may ſay that God does always that "which is FITTEST to be done. And that this fitneſs, where-"of

SERM. 2. The reaſon ſeems convincing. The moral relation in which we ſtand to God, as free Agents, is juſt the ſame whether Man exiſts alone, or whether he be but a link in the chain of innumerable orders of Intelligencies ſurrounding the whole Creation. Hence we muſt needs have a juſt and full knowledge of our duty to him, and of his diſpoſition towards us: On which knowledge is founded, the exactneſs of our conceptions of his Moral attributes, his JUSTICE and GOODNESS. But the natural relation in which we, or any of God's creatures, ſtand towards him, as Material Beings, is not the ſame, when conſidered ſimply, as when a portion of a dependent and connected Whole. Becauſe, whenever ſuch a whole exiſts, the harmony and perfection of it muſt firſt of all be conſulted. This harmony ariſeth from the mutual ſubſerviency and union of it's parts. But this ſubſerviency may require a miniſtration of government, with regard to certain portions of matter thus allied, different from what might have followed had thoſe portions ſtood alone: becauſe that preciſe diſpoſition, which might be fit in one caſe, might be unfit in the other. Hence we who know there is a Whole, of which our material ſyſtem is a part; and yet are totally ignorant both of it's nature and extent, can have but a very confuſed idea of that phyſical relation

" of neither that preſumptuous dogmatiſt was, nor any crea-
" ted being is a competent Judge, *reſults from the various na-*
" *tures and more various relations if things. So that as creator*
" *of* ALL SYSTEMS, by which theſe *natures and relations are*
" *conſtituted, he preſcribed to himſelf the rule which he follows,*
" AS GOVERNOR OF EVERY SYSTEM OF BEING."—Lord Bolingbroke's *Idea of a patriot King*, Lond. printed 1749. p. 94.

in

in which we ſtand towards God. So that our conceptions of his natural Attributes, his POWER and WISDOM, which are founded on that idea, muſt in the concrete, be proportionably vague and inadequate. SERM. 2.

Shall we, then, confide in that information which our leſs adequate ideas of God's power and wiſdom afford us of his natural government; and yet reject that which our more adequate ideas of his juſtice and goodneſs give us of his moral government? We underſtand both, and rightly, as aſſuring us that he preſides both in the one and in the other Oeconomy. But let us not forget, that this information is conveyed to us with very different degrees of clearneſs and preciſion. A difference, on the ſide of moral government above natural, in proportion as our knowledge of God's moral attributes is leſs vague and inadequate than our knowledge of his natural.

III. Thus far from a ſeparate conſideration of the CREATOR and his WORKS. Let us ſee, in the laſt place, whether the ſame Truth may not be further ſupported from a joint view of BOTH of them together.

The idea of an immenſly extended Univerſe tempts weak reaſon, deluded by ſenſe and narrowed by prejudice, to ſuſpect that this point of ſpace, in which man exiſts, may well eſcape a buſied Ruler, who has innumerable Worlds upon his hands. We do not reflect, that the ſame reaſoning, which leads us to conclude that a point of ſpace may be overlooked in God's providence, piercing thro' infinite extenſion, would lead

SERM. 2. lead us to conclude, that there may be points of time, throughout infinite duration, which likewiſe eſcaped his attention. Yet the abſurdity of this, we feel: Why not then of the other? The reaſon is, becauſe the portions of Time riſe only in ſucceſſion; whereas all the parts of ſpace exiſt together.

But this IMMENSITY, in which bewildered man conſiders himſelf as abſorbed and loſt, will, on due reflection, evince the very contrary to what it is brought to prove. Were Creation not thus widely extended, the infinity of it's Author might perhaps ſeem leſs evident. And how far the influence or power of a Being not infinite might reach would be yet more uncertain. But a boundleſs creation ſhews its Author to be infinite: So that the remaining queſtion concerning the extent of Providence will amount to this, Whether an infinite Being can extend his care to every the minuteſt portion of an Univerſe to which we can ſet no bounds. A queſtion, which will hardly deſerve an anſwer.

"But (ſay theſe objectors) the moral ſyſtem wants one eſſential mark of divine ſuperintendence, which is ORDER; and this the natural very eminently bears. The Sun keeps its firſt appointed ſtation; the Planets perform their accuſtomed revolutions; each Element preſerves its diſtinct properties; and all nature concurs to produce that harmony, with which things ſet out, when God honoured his riſing Creation with the attribute of GOOD. But Man deflected early from his primeval righteouſneſs, and felt the miſeries of a depraved ſyſtem ere he had fully taſted the

he bleſſings which flow from the rectitude of the Will, and from the even ballance of the Affections. And what he ſo early loſt, Time has never yet been able to reſtore; ſo that he is likely to continue the ſame forlorn abandoned creature throughout the whole of his exiſtence." SERM. 2.

But theſe Objections are as vague as they are tale. We have been accuſtomed to talk at random of the ORDER of natural things; and we ſuffer our ſelves to aggravate the DISORDERS of he Moral.

We can judge but very imperfectly of the whole f the material ſyſtem. For how ſmall is the portion of Body objected to our view! and how eeting the period of time allotted for our ſtudy!

We ſee indeed, perpetual peace and concord n our own ſolar World, but we know little of he aſtral ſyſtems, innumerable and remote. And he little we do know gives cauſe of ſuſpicion hat all there is not ſo regular and conſtant, as nalogy to what we find here, would tempt us to onclude. New ſtars have ſuddenly ſhone out; nd have as ſuddenly diſappeared: Phænomena, hich look either like eccentric ſtarts in the ourſes of thoſe bodies, or deſtructive revolutions in their Natures. Nor are we without ſome ppearances in OUR OWN Syſtem, to give counenance to theſe ſuſpicions in the more remote. erhaps the Ring of Saturn may be no other han a leſs irregular fragment of a cruſhed and roken Globe. The wounds, our own Earth ath formerly received, are yet deep and gaſtly; hich tho' skinned over by time and human culure, are ſeen, by thoſe who pry the leaſt beyond

its

SERM. 2. its ſurface, to bear all the marks and memory of a ruined world.

But to turn from theſe ſuppoſed flaws and maims in ſome of the parts, to the acknowledged perfections of the general Syſtem. Its order and harmony, it muſt be owned, ſpeak moſt fully to the ſuſtaining power of its Lord and Maſter: yet thoſe who have penetrated deepeſt into its myſteries have diſcovered rooted evils and growing diſorders, ſcarce ſenſible, indeed, at preſent, but what, in time, and without the intervening hand of its Maker, will render the frame of nature altogether unfit for the purpoſes of its general deſtination [a].

It is true, it may be ſaid, "That theſe proceed ſlowly and inſenſibly, while moral diſorders infect at once, and ruſh like a torrent over the fair boſom of Creation."

The thing perhaps is too true: but the inference is unjuſt. This difference is not to be aſcribed to a contrary conduct in the Governor, but to the contrary natures of the ſubjects.

Paſſive Matter being totally inert, its reſiſtance to the Laws impreſſed upon it, muſt be extremely weak: and conſequently the diſorders ariſing from that reſiſtance, proportionably ſlow and unheeded: while that active ſelf-moving principle,

[a] ——"While Comets move in very eccentric orbs in all "manner of poſitions, blind fate could never make all the "planets move one and the ſame way in orbs concentric; *ſome "inconſiderable irregularities excepted, which may have ariſen "from the mutual actions of Comets and Planets upon one ano-"ther; and which will be apt to increaſe, till this ſyſtem wants "a reformation.*" Newton's *Opt.* 4th Ed. p. 378.

the

the Mind, flies out at once from the centre of its direction, and can, every moment, deflect from the line of truth and reaſon. Hence moral diſorders began early, became preſently exceſſive, and have continued thro' all ages to diſturb the harmony of the Syſtem. SERM. 2.

Nor are the different methods employed by Providence, for the reform of either ſyſtem, leſs diſtinguiſhable, than the different qualities of Mind and Matter, which occaſion ſo wide a diſtance in the progreſs of their ſeveral diſorders: as may be ſeen by comparing them together. From whence it will appear that the diſorder and the reform of that diſorder, in either ſubject, are wiſely proportioned to one another,

When the inertneſs of MATTER hath occaſioned irregularities in the corporeal ſyſtem, it hath no ability in itſelf to redreſs them. They muſt go on, tho' ſlowly, from bad to worſe, till diſabled nature calls upon the hand of God for an extraordinary reformation.

But MIND, is ever applying remedies to its own diſtempers. Firſt by the check put to them by the ſtimulation of oppoſite paſſions and affections; for the appetites are inceſſantly defeating one another's natural tendencies, and perpetually producing contrary effects. So avarice reſtrains luxury; ſelf-intereſt withholds injuſtice; and ſloth quenches ambition: So revenge and hatred procure public juſtice; treachery often prevents a national deſtruction; and envy and oppoſition to power produces a ſage and cautious adminiſtration.

Thus

SERM. 2. Thus the jarring intereſts of corrupt paſſion keep moral evil within moderate bounds, and give time and opportunity to the mind to recover the government and direction of itſelf; in the regulation of the appetites and reformation of the will: And this is the ſecond way the mind has of procuring remedies for its own diſtempers.

In theſe different methods of reforming either ſyſtem, the divine goodneſs is equally diſplayed; only his power is more viſibly exerciſed in the one, and his wiſdom in the other. When blind Matter deviates, as nothing but the conducting hand of God can bring her back into the road of Nature, ſo the force attending that reduction is ſo far from imparing her eſſential virtue that it heals and reſtores it. But the like intervention with a rational Agent would impinge upon his freedom. God has therefore ſo admirably contrived, in the diſpoſition of his moral Syſtem, that it ſhould be able to reſtore itſelf; by making its very diſorders contribute to its reform, in the check the vitious paſſions give to one another's operations; and in the opportunities with which time ſupplies the Mind, to aſſume its native ſovereignty, for the carrying on the reformation.

Thus we ſee God's government in morals becomes as conſpicuous as in natural things: For, the diſpoſing cauſes and effects in ſuch a manner as to make vice defeat it's own end, no leſs manifeſts the attention of infinite wiſdom, than the aiding matter to produce its proper deſtination, is fitted to diſplay infinite power.

But

But to perceive the force of what is here ſaid, we muſt remember, that moral government conſiſts of TWO PARTS; The one, a Proviſion to prevent evil, and to ſupport good; The other, a deſtination of reward and puniſhment, aſſign'd in due proportions to the agents of either: Our ſubject concerns the firſt part only: The ſecond is to be explained on other principles; and is not within the limits of this Diſcourſe. SERM. 2.

To conclude, The ſober inquirer will not be diſpleaſed to find at length, that the objections to God's moral Government ſpring from the weakneſs of our faculties, and the prejudices attending our ſituation; join to a corrupt vanity which makes human reaſon the meaſure of all things: and that this Philoſophy, which bears ſuch a ſhew of inlarged and ſuperior knowledge, ſtands on the narrow bottom of ignorance, and as it riſes in vanity, increaſes in abſurdity.

TO HUMBLE HUMAN REASON is the work of true Religion, and, if not the end, is always the iſſue, of ſound Philoſophy: but to DEBASE HUMAN NATURE is the low aim of impiety, and the darling project of corrupt manners. Providence laid open the knowledge of his works to excite our gratitude, and ſtrengthen our attachment to their Author. What the philoſopher ſaid of *the knowledge of ourſelves* may be well applied to the knowledge of the univerſe. "Let us not imagine it was given merely to humble human arrogance: One great purpoſe of it was to impreſs upon our hearts a ſenſe of the

SERM. 2. the divine goodneſs towards man." To turn this knowledge, therefore, to a brutal debaſement of our nature, or a philoſophic oblivion of our Lord and Maſter, is the loweſt depravity of an intelligent Being. In a word, if reaſon and piety have no weight, let natural ſhame deter us, when we can never merit this diſtinction, at leaſt from diſhonouring the grace by irreverent cavils at the diſpenſation.

[a] Illud γνῶθι σαυτὸν noli putare ad arrogantiam minuendam ſolum eſſe dictum, verum etiam ut bona noſtra norimus. Cic.

SERMON

SERMON III.

The Love of God and Man.

1 Ep. JOHN, iv. 20.

If a Man ſay, I love God and hateth his Brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his Brother whom he hath ſeen, how can he love God whom he hath not ſeen?

SERM. 3.

THE ſuperior excellence of the Goſpel-morality above all other ſummaries of human conduct, whether preached up as RELIGION by Prieſts; inforced for LAW by the founders of Society; or recommended under the name of PHILOSOPHY by the Maſters of wiſdom; is now ſo generally ſeen and acknowledged, that even the enemies of Revelation have been forced to confeſs, It is as well in perfection as in purity; as well in public uſe, as in private, truly worthy the original it aſſumes.

An advantage which the Miniſters of our holy Religion have, with great judgment, taken all occaſions to inforce, and with equal ſolidity to explain.

But there is another circumſtance in this divine Oeconomy which carries the honour of it ſtill

SERM. 3. higher, as directly tending to prove, That the Goſpel-morality which is ſo worthy of God, had, in truth, God for its immediate Author. And this perhaps may not have been inſiſted on with the frequency and attention which ſo important a matter ſeems to require.

The circumſtance I mean is that profound and enlarged knowledge of human nature, which the Apoſtles diſcover in their manner of recommending moral duties. In this diſpenſation, theſe *weak and fooliſh inſtruments*, in the hand of Providence, have foiled and diſgraced the boaſted wiſdom of Greece and Rome: and in that very way wherein their wiſdom moſt excelled; in ſhort and detached precepts, compoſed for the conduct of human life, by men ſtudious to reduce their long laborious ſearches after happineſs into weighty and compendious aphoriſms. a

But before I proceed to explain the words of my text, which afford ſo illuſtrious an example of this truth, I ſhall conſider, in general, the occaſion of them.

The life, the ſpirit of Chriſtian Religion is univerſal benevolence. Agreeably to this, we may obſerve, That the firſt founders of the Churches, let the occaſion be what it would, whatever Diſcipline they eſtabliſhed, whatever Doctrine they inforced, whatever vice or Hereſy they ſtigmatized, or whatever grace or virtue they recommended, CHARITY was the thing ſtill preſent with them, and always in their care. Charity,

a Ῥήματα βραχέα ἀξιομνημόνευτα. Plat. in Protag.

the

the bond of perfectneſs, the *end of the command-* SERM.
ment; that ethereal principle, which like the 3.
elaſtic fluid of the Philoſophers, animates, connects, and enobles the whole Syſtem of intelligent nature.

The beloved Diſciple of our Lord particularly, who may be well ſuppoſed to *know his Maſter's will*, ſeems to have written the Epiſtle, from whence I take my text, with no other deſign than to recommend this firſt of Virtues, CHARITY: at a ſeaſon too, when, as Hereſies were ſpringing up apace, ſome modern Theologiſts would be apt to think he might have employed his time and talents to more advantage. And indeed one might ask, and ſcarce abſurdly, why ſo very much upon Charity, in an age when the *followers of the Lamb* had ſo few inducements to pollute it? For the Faith being yet chaſte from the proſtitutions of the Schools, and the Hierachy uncorrupted by the gifts of Conſtantine, the Church laboured neither under Bigotry nor Ambition, the two fatal incentives of uncharitable Zeal. But the reply is eaſy. It was the providence of that prophetic ſpirit which ſet before them the image of thoſe miſerable times, *When iniquity ſhould abound, and the love of many ſhould wax cold:* and they were willing to bear witneſs, and to record their teſtimony againſt the future violaters of *the bond of perfectneſs*. For I can by no means enter into the refinements of him who diſcovered that *Jeſus* and his followers might preach up love and charity the better to enable a ſet of Church politicians ſome ages after, to tyrannize over thoſe whom the engaging ſounds of

SERM. 3. benevolence and brotherly love had intrapped into obedience. [b]

Beſides, this is not delivered like a temporary direction; it is not barely recommended: the reaſon, on which it ſtands, is given with it; a reaſon founded in the nature of things, and ſupported by the very order of Providence. *If a man ſay, I love God, and hateth his Brother he is a liar: for he that loveth not his Brother whom he hath ſeen, how can he love God whom he hath not ſeen?* An argument, which, for its unaffected ſimplicity, a modiſh Freethinker will be tempted to deſpiſe; and yet would pretend to admire, had it come from Plato or Cicero.

But ſome, perhaps, may like the reaſoning not the worſe for its being evangelical: and ſuch

[b] "Terrors alone, tho' accompanied with miracles and "prodigies of whatever kind, are not capable of raiſing that "ſincere faith and abſolute reliance which is required in favour of the divinely authoriſed Inſtructor and ſpiritual Chief. "The affection and love which procures a true adherence to "the new religious foundation, muſt depend either on a real "or counterfeit goodneſs in the religious founder. Whatever "ambitious ſpirit may inſpire him; whatever ſavage zeal or "perſecuting principle may lye in reſerve, ready to diſcloſe itſelf when authority and power is once obtained; the firſt "ſcene of doctrine, however, fails not to preſent us with the "agreeable views of *Joy, love, meekneſs, gentleneſs, and moderation.*——*Charity and Brotherly love* are very engaging "ſounds; but who would dream that out of abundant Charity and brotherly love ſhould come ſteel, fire, gibbets, rods, "etc." *Characteriſticks*, vol. iii. p. 114, 115. Ed. 4th. But the general premiſes are as falſe as the particular inference is abſurd. Mahomet did raiſe that *ſincere faith and abſolute reliance*, amongſt his followers, by *terrors* alone, and without that *affection and love* employed by the founder of Chriſtianity.

will

will bear with me while I attempt to illuſtrate its ſuperior force and beauty. SERM.

The Argument is founded in the true theory of the RISE and PROGRESS of the SOCIAL AFFECTIONS; of which the following account may afford us ſome imperfect notion.

An endeavour to preſerve it's Being makes part of the eſſential conſtitution of every created thing. Hence, in the Inanimate, a reſiſtance to outward force; in the Animate, a purſuit or an abhorrence of what is helpful or hurtful; and, in Man, that firſt and ſtrongeſt paſſion of his nature, SELF-LOVE; from whence all the other appetites derive their force, and to which they direct their aim. Its uſe is to aſſiſt the heart to awaken Virtue, and to puſh out and develope the great principle of BENEVOLENCE.

It is true, indeed, that Benevolence, ariſing from this ſource, at firſt runs thick and turbid; but, as it holds its way, it refines; it purifies and expands its current, till it hath loſt all memory of its low original.

For the paſſion of ſelf-love aided by the kindred appetite of NATURAL AFFECTION, ſoon makes an effort to move outward; and looking forward with an inſtinctive-tenderneſs on our offspring, it is taught to turn its regard, as far back, with rational-gratitude on our Parents. And tho' the former be loving ourſelves as repreſented in others; and the latter, only loving others as repreſented in ourſelves; yet the principle of Benevolence being now awakened, it begins, from this moment to deſert its origine: it extends itſelf to our remoter relatives; and, in a little time

SERM. 3. takes in every connection of domeſtic life. And, thus continuing to enlarge and widen, by ſuch time as it grows impatient of reſtraint, the wants and reliefs, the ſervices and protection, which exerciſe its virtue in this inferior ſtate, enable it to form ideas of a nobler Community, and to trace the out-lines and image of a SOCIETY. This produceth another effort, and of a more exalted kind: the object of benevolence being no longer an INDIVIDUAL, but a WHOLE.

From this time the ſocial paſſions make large advances; and Benevolence, improved and ſtrengthened even by the ſelfiſh ſenſe of mutual wants, and the experienced means of mutual relief, extends its influence and efficacy thro' the whole community of thoſe who need, or can impart, aſſiſtance: and thus, on the natural plan of domeſtic-connections, erects that artificial regimen called Civil-ſociety. So that, as before, Benevolence advanced from particular to general; it now riſeth ſtill higher, from PRIVATE to PUBLIC. And thus, having a Community for its object, it wins and truly deſerves its name: Self-love being now abſorbed in the nobleſt of all ſocial-paſſions, THE LOVE OF OUR COUNTRY: which the Roman Patriot, in a philoſophic analyſis of its generation and conſtituent parts, rightly defines to be that which "includes all other ſocial affections [c]."

Thus doth SELF-LOVE, under the varying appearance of natural-affection, domeſtic relation,

[c] Chari ſunt *Parentes*, chari *Liberi*, *Propinqui*, *Familiares*: ſed omnes omnium Charitates PATRIA una complexa eſt. *Cic.*

and

and the connections of ſocial habitude, at firſt work blindly on, obſcure and deep in dirt; but, as it makes its way, it continues riſing, till it emerges into light; and then, ſuddenly expiring, leaves behind it the faireſt iſſue: which nobly forgetful of its low beginning, advances on the ſteps of Virtue, till it reaches to RELIGION. SERM. 3.

For the intereſts of mere animal life being well ſecured in this firſt progreſs to Benevolence; the Mind, which hitherto only cared for the Body, begins to make proviſion for itſelf; and, having laid in for the other's wants and weakneſs, attends, in good time, to its own ſuperior dignity and importance.

And now, placed on ſo fair an eminence, as the LOVE OF OUR COUNTRY, and its ſight purged and defecated from the groſs remains of evaneſcent Self-love, it goes on widening its views, till it hath taken in the whole race of Mankind; conſidered but as one Policy, or rather FAMILY; connected by the equal participation of one common nature; and ſupported by the conſequent right of one common meaſure; and therefore the endeared object of one general benevolence.

Thus DOMESTIC life, which firſt produced Civil-ſociety, and then gave birth to this more generous and enlarged community, at length brings Benevolence round again into itſelf, as to its full and final completion, by drawing the whole race of mankind into one common FAMILY.

But, in the courſe of this progreſs, the Mind, as it widens, becoming fatigued and dazzled by

SERM. 3. its intenſe ſolicitation of this growing Whole, hath frequent need, at its ſeveral ſtages, to catch at and to reſt in partial objects.

Hence the origine of FRIENDSHIP[a], the ſolace and ſplendor of private life; which while we are advancing towards that only adequate object of human attachment, a Whole, teacheth us by the way, all our journalary duties to Particulars.

Having thus endeavoured to explain how all the virtues of humanity ariſe, and have their ſource, from the gradual expanſion of the great principle of Benevolence: we come, in the next place, to conſider, how, in its further advances to perfection, RELIGION itſelf emergeth from it.

In all the objects of love and benevolence, the attractive quality is GOOD. And this connexion

[a] "*Private Friendſhip*, and *Zeal for the Public and our Country* are virtues purely *voluntary* in a Chriſtian. They are *no eſſential parts* of his CHARITY. He is not ſo tied to the affairs of this life; nor is he obliged to enter into ſuch engagements with this lower world, as are of no help to him in acquiring a better." *Characteriſtics*, 4th Ed. vol. i. p. 98, 99. The Philoſophy of this remark is like the candor. For if (as we ſhall now ſee) no one can acquire the love of God without having love or benevolence to man; ſo neither can this benevolence, (which certainly is not a *virtue purely voluntary in a Chriſtian*) be acquired, without having had *private Friendſhip and zeal for the Public and our Country*. The reaſon is the ſame in both caſes: the road to the more *general* ſtages of benevolence lying, all the way, thro' the more *particular*. *Engagements*, therefore, *with this lower world*, (to uſe the language of the noble Writer) *are* (contrary to his concluſion) *of* great *help to us in acquiring a better*.—But when Chriſtian Charity had been repreſented as not ſpringing from Virtue, it was no ſuch bold abuſe of the public indulgence to endeavour to perſuade us, that the Chriſtian Faith *is not founded in Argument*.

being

being made by the nature and conſtitution of things, the greater the apparent good, the ſtronger muſt the paſſion grow. Now when the whole human race is conſidered by us as the object of our love; The ſteps by which we are led to this high advance in benevolence, ſuch as Man's origine, his common nature, and the dependance of the happineſs of the individual on the ſpecies, carry us naturally higher; to ſeek the firſt cauſe of ſo orderly and well regulated an effect. An inquiry, which terminates in the Author of this, and of all other good: Whom, as ſuch, we are forcibly drawn to purſue, and to aſpire after; and in the contemplation of whoſe nature and attributes we find at laſt the SUPREME AND SOVEREIGN GOOD: from whence, as we ſay, all other good ariſeth, and in which they are all contained. HE, therefore, challengeth our ſupreme and ſovereign love; which never ceaſeth to advance and enlarge itſelf, till it end in an UNION with him. SERM. 3.

And thus the laſt great effort of benevolence produceth what we call, RELIGION; whoſe end all agree to be HAPPINESS.

This is the true account of the riſe and progreſs of UNIVERSAL LOVE: which, as it regards man, our holy faith calls CHARITY; as it regards God, PIETY.

But there were in the apoſtolic times, and will be in all times, a ſort of men who are for catching at the rewards of faith without undergoing this long, but pleaſing *labour of love*; and whoſe frantic aim is to make a ſacrilegious divorce between

SERM. 3. tween Charity and Piety. These men assume to themselves great merit in loving God, while they treat their Brother with contempt and cruelty. But what says the Apostle, in my text? Provoked at their hypocrisy, he strips off the mask, and brands them with the odious name of LIARS: a name, in Scripture language, of the most opprobrious import; as given to Impostors of all kinds; and implying in it every thing corrupt both in moral and religious practise. *If a man* (says St. John) *say, I love God, and hateth his Brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his Brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen.* The force and beauty of which reasoning the foregoing account, of the rise and progress of Benevolence, will enable us to understand.

"You pretend, says the Apostle, to *love God*, tho' you *hate your Brother*. Vain and fallacious! The love of every object begins, like all our other passions, from self-love: Thus we love ourselves, by representation, in our Parents, and in our Offspring: it extends to our remoter relatives; and so on, thro' the whole vicinage, to every fellow-member of the Community. And now, self-love refined by reason, and sublimed by virtue, begins to lose its nature, and deservedly to take another name. Our Country next claims our love; we then extend it to all Mankind; and never rest till we have, at length, fixed it on the most amiable of all objects, the great Author and Original of Being.

This is the course and progress of HUMAN LOVE; gradually rising from the individual to the whole:

whole: as unlike, in its progreſs as in its puri- SERM.
ty, to the DIVINE BENEVOLENCE; which, in 3.
gracious aid of its Creatures, takes a different courſe: for, ſpringing from the Whole, it ſpreads and expands itſelf thro' every moral ſyſtem, till it claſps and embraces the Individual.

And now (purſues the Apoſtle) I reaſon thus, Can you, miſtaken man! who are not yet arrived at that inferior ſtage of benevolence, the love of your Brother, *whom you have ſeen*, that is, whom the ſenſe of mutual wants, and the experience of mutual relief, amongſt the joint partakers of one common nature, might teach you to love, can you pretend to have attained the top and ſummit of this virtue, the love of God, whom *you have not ſeen*, that is, whoſe wonderful œconomy, in the ſyſtem of creation and government, which makes him ſo amiable, you, appear to have no conception of; You, who have not yet learnt, that your own low ſyſtem is ſupported on the great principle of benevolence. Fear him, flatter him, fight for him, as you blindly dread his power, you may: But, to love him, as you know not his nature, is impoſſible."

This is St. John's ſimple reaſoning. From whence I conclude for the divinity of that Spirit, which could infuſe ſo much ſublime knowledge into the pen of a rude unlettered fiſherman.

Nor does it leſs recommend the excellence of our holy Religion, than the wiſdom of this its Miniſter: for what could give us a higher idea of Chriſtianity than its making the love of man the previous ſtep, the only way of acquiring, that happy

SERM. 3. happy frame of mind, divinely tempered with the love of God; which fits us for what is the end and completion of all religion, the poſſeſſion of his Spirit?

But this doctrine, which explains the connection between *the love of God and man*, has ſtill a further uſe. It keeps our holy Faith pure from SUPERSTITION, BIGOTRY, and FANATICISM: the three worſt diſhonours to which Religion is expoſed:

1. For DIVINE LOVE thus produced, and riſing on the knowledge of God's nature, will keep religious worſhip free of SUPERSTITION, will preſerve it from all barbarous and abject ceremonies; and from all ſelfiſh and uncharitable devotion. It will remove from God's ſervice all ſlaviſh dread of his anger for the neglect of actions indifferent; and all childiſh hope of attoning for violated morality by the performance of others, equally indifferent.

2. This LOVE, ſtanding on the foundation of human benevolence, whoſe object is God's rational creation, will exclude all the BIGOTRY of falſe Zeal, which, for God's ſake, is ever ready to deſolate the earth. For now, no one can be ſo abſurd to imagine, that the means of perfecting the fruit of faith, which is the love of God, is by ſhaking the root of charity, benevolence to man. I am aware, how certain propagators of the Faith, ſometimes the deſpicable tools of other's impotency, but, as often, the viler ſlaves of their own ambition, have endeavoured to hide their corrupt paſſions under the thin covering of a School-diſtinction. While they would perſuade

perſuade us, that it is pure charity to man which thus factiouſly engages them in, what they call THE CAUSE OF GOD: and that what plain honeſt men ſtile a want of Charity, when they inſult the fame, the fortune, or the perſon of their Brother, is the very height of this princely virtue, a Charity for his ſoul.—So, indeed, it may be of the Hangman's Charity, who waits for your Clothes. But St. John's, or St. Paul's it could not be. It could not be that *Charity* which was *not eaſily provoked, which thought no evil; bore all things, hoped all things, believed all things.* A Charity which begins in candor, inſpires good opinion, and reſts in the temporal welfare of our Brother. SERM. 3.

3. But the *deceitfulneſs of the heart* is ingenious in expedients to elude the commandments of God. And when Bigotry, by its coarſe and butcherly violations of Charity, hath ſufficiently diſcredited its own meaſures, FANATICISM, with equal rage, tho' with ſomewhat a milder aſpect, ſteps in to diveſt us of our humanity, under pretence, to aſſimilate it to the divine nature, by annihilating all love of the Creature, and reſolving every other affection into the pure unmixed love of God; as if the leaſt portion of benevolence, communicated to our Brother, was a robbery to our Maker. The fumes of ſpiritual madneſs diſable theſe men from ſeeing ſo far into the order of things, as to underſtand, that till we can throw off the condition of related Beings, as well as the paſſion of humanity which reſults from it, our fellow creatures will always have a claim to our benevolence. In compaſſion therefore, to

ſuch,

SERM. 3. such, Holy Scripture has provided a ſtill eaſier inſtruction than this negative precept of my text, by the addition of the poſitive command, THAT HE WHO LOVETH GOD, LOVE HIS BROTHER ALSO *.

Such then is the Religion which Jeſus came into the world to teach. Whoſe foundation being laid in the *love of our Brother*, provides for our peace and conſolation here; and whoſe ſuperſtructure terminating in the *love of God*, ſecures and eſtabliſhes our happineſs hereafter.

* 1 John iv. 21.

SERMON

SERMON IV.

The Love of God and Man.

PROVERBS xvii. 5.

Whoſo mocketh the Poor reproacheth his Maker.

OF all the truths, for the direction of our conduct, with which this royal treaſury of ancient wiſdom abounds, there is none fuller either of profitable uſe or profound ſcience than this contained in my text; which ſo ſeverely cenſures all expreſſions of contempt towards thoſe whom Providence has thrown below us on the diſtreſsful ſtage of human Life. SERM. 4.

And as we muſt firſt clear our corrupt nature from this rankneſs, before we can attempt to cultivate that immortal amarant of paradice, chriſtian love and benevolence; it may not be improper to ſhew the reaſon and explain the uſe of the WISE MAN's divine aphoriſm, *Whoſo mocketh the Poor reproacheth his Maker*. As much as to ſay, "He who maketh the Poor the object of his contempt and ridicule, on account of thoſe diſaſtrous circumſtances which attend the want of the goods of fortune, tacitly condemns and reproaches the wiſe and gracious order of Providence."

But

SERM. 4. But it may not be amiſs, previouſly to conſider, In what ſtate it is, that man becomes the object of this criminal *mockery* to his fellow-creature. It is plain, it cannot be in that where he lives uncivilized. For there, the diſtinctions between RICH and POOR, whereon the inſolence of wealth formeth thoſe odious compariſons, which conclude in the contempt of penury, have hardly any place; that ſordid condition, which, now contraſted to pomp and grandeur is become the ſubject of opulent ſcorn, being there ſo general as to admit no room for an unfavourable diſtinction: But, an univerſal parity, like darkneſs, blots out all difference between honourable and mean. Nay, ſhould the civilized beholder be diſpoſed to regard with contempt the wants and miſeries of this ſtate, it would not be the criminal contempt forbidden in my text: becauſe the ſtate of nature is not that in which Providence intended we ſhould remain; as appears by the large aſſiſtance imparted to us, to free ourſelves from the diſtreſſes of it. So that if, by a ſhameful indolence, man ſhould neglect to improve thoſe advantages, the ſordid circumſtances, inſeparable from an uncivilized condition, would have no claim to be exempted from ſcorn and *mockery*: and, conſequently, however CHARITY might ſuffer, PROVIDENCE was not inſulted.

It is only in SOCIETY, therefore, that the Poor become ſubject to this outrage. And, in this ſtate only, the outrage becomes IMPIETY. For Civil regimen, by inventing and improving the accommodations of life, and by ſecuring, to the owner, what is ſo invented and improved, changeth

changeth the natural equality of conditions amongſt men; and introduceth that invidious diſtinction of POOR and RICH; made far more bitter from the inſolence of Wealth, than the envious longings of Poverty. For it is the vicious caprice of Riches to be impatient under a rivalſhip in the advantages of fortune, and yet, at the ſame time, inſenſible to the diſtreſſes, and contemptuous to the condition of thoſe who have never ſtriven with them for any of thoſe advantages. SERM. 4.

So that there is no circumſtance in the diſtreſſes of want, but what inſulting wealth can make the ſubject of its *mockery*. To ſome, their narrow Minds, their groſs conceptions, their unimproved talents, are fruitful ſources of contempt and merriment. Others, who cannot riſe ſo high in their diſcoveries, can yet find matter of mirth in their impropriety of phraſe, their unpoliſhed manners, their ill air, and unformed figure. Nay to ſuch exceſs of corruption have unbleſt Riches brought their poſſeſſors, that ſome can make that very SORDIDNESS itſelf, that miſerable cloathing of poverty, a ſubject for their ſcorn and ridicule. So that whether it be for want of thoſe advantages of mind and perſon which their poverty diſabled them from procuring, or whether it be for that very poverty itſelf, they are ſure never to eſcape the inhumanity of unfeeling wealth.

But how highly criminal theſe inſults are, my next now leads me to conſider.

As Society is the only means of procuring the accommodations and preſerving the dignity, of our animal and reaſonable nature; and as this nature

SERM. 4. is endowed with appetites and qualities which make it ſeek, and fit it for SOCIETY; we muſt needs conclude, Society to be, what Scripture informs us it is, THE ORDINANCE OF GOD. Now it is eſſential to this Society, that the goods of fortune be unequally diſtributed; To the end, that ſome be goaded on by want, to ſeek their relief in new inventions and improvements, which tending to the better commodity of life, are objective to the publick good; and that others be enabled by abundance, and diſpoſed by the love of eaſe and pleaſure, to promote and encourage thoſe endeavours. For were the goods of fortune to be equally divided, ſuch a diſtribution would ſoon return us to the ſtate of unimproved nature, by taking off thoſe ſpurs to induſtry, the rewards attending the improvements of *ſocial* life.

Again, as an unequal diſtribution was required to anſwer the ends of civil community, ſo the various tempers, talents, and appetites of men were admirably fitted to introduce, and framed to perpetuate this inequality.

Hence, we conclude, That theſe different ſtations in Society were marked out and diſpoſed by the peculiar ordinance of Providence: For he who decrees the end, muſt needs be ſuppoſed to direct the means conducive to it.

But admitting this to be the caſe, it muſt needs follow, that he who makes any of theſe conditions of life the ſubject of his ſcorn and *mockery*, *reproaches* the juſtice and goodneſs of the Director of the ſyſtem. For that man can never be ſaid to be treated with a common degree of goodneſs, who is thruſt into ſuch a ſtation as makes him the

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object of reaſonable contempt to his fellow-crea- SERM.
ture; a creature of the ſame ſpecies, and who has 4.
no imaginable pretenſions to better treatment from the juſtice of their common maſter.

We muſt needs, therefore, ſubſcribe to the doctrine of the text, That no greater inſult can be offered to the wiſdom, the juſtice, or the goodneſs of God, than by looking down with deſpite and *mockery* on the poverty of our diſtreſſed brethren.

Yet vile as this *mockery* is, the frequent practice hath made it ſo unheeded, that we ſee it committed daily without ſuffering ourſelves to be affected with that averſion and abhorrence, ſo juſtly due into it. Hence the ſerious admonition of the *wiſe man*; who the better to aſſiſt our humanity in the free exerciſe of its natural feelings, awakens religion, by branding the vice as an IMPIETY: in every deliberate act of which is compriſed all that is moſt criminal in our degenerate and corrupt nature.

This ſpecies of impiety in particular, contains the baſeſt INGRATITUDE towards God, and INHUMANITY to our Brother: Which, including the violation of all our relations as reaſonable creatures, ſinks us below the very beaſts themſelves.

And can there be a worſe ingratitude towards the great Diſpoſer of all things, than for man to make any ſtation in Society the object of his contempt? Society, which God himſelf *ordained* for the advancement of human happineſs! and which can be only procured by means of thoſe various degrees and ſubordinations, productive

SERM. 4. of that condition, which we impiouſly make the matter of our ſcorn. Is this a fitting return for the care and kindneſs of that Maſter, who drew us from a ſtate of ſavages, who led us to a life of civility, and hath put it in our power to improve the bleſſings of Providence, and the endowments of reaſon, moſt ſuitably to the dignity of our nature!

We may reflect, likewiſe, that we, who thus offend, do by the peculiar indulgence of Heaven, reap all the benefit of Society; while thoſe we injure are ſo circumſtanced as to bear all the inclemencies and hardſhips of it; a burthen, which weighs the heavier on them, as it is borne alone. And yet if we look into ourſelves and them, and compare what we find on either part, we ſhall diſcover nothing which could diſpoſe the *righteous Judge of all the earth* to decree a ſtate of eaſe and affluence for us, and condemn them to indigence and labour. Nay, were we not blinded by ſelf-love, we ſhould ſoon find in this deſpiſed quarter, men whoſe underſtandings and honeſty, whoſe piety and diligence, whoſe care and affection for their families, whoſe conſcientious ſubmiſſion and obedience to authority, might well enable them to diſpute, and qualify them to carry the ſtation of honour, from their Betters.

But how deteſtable muſt this ingratitude appear, when we reflect further, That theſe low ſtations, the object of our ſcorn, were ordained for no other civil purpoſe than to ſupport us in that diſtinction of abundance, from the wanton abuſe of which ariſes all this guilt of contempt,

tempt, which ſo juſtly ſubjects the offender to God's righteous judgment. So that we carry our impiety to ſuch a height, when we *mock the poor*, that we even *reproach our Maker* with the very bleſſings which, at their expence, he heaps upon ourſelves. SERM. 4.

And this leads me to the ſecond point, the INHUMANITY to our Brethren. Indeed the very conſiderations which upbraid our ingratitude to our *Maker*, expoſe our inhumanity to the *Poor*. For can any thing be more inhumane than, when the ſtations of Society are thus neceſſarily unequal, and when Providence has thrown our lot amongſt the few who reap in eaſe the accommodations of it, at the expence of multitudes, who had as good a claim to that diſtinction; Can any thing, I ſay, be more inhumane than to treat their leſs happy condition with outrage and contempt? A condition, from which no ſuperiority of nature, no advantage of intellectual, or merit of moral endowments, nothing but the eſtabliſhed order of things, hath exempted us, or ſubjected them.

If to this, we add, (as hath been juſt obſerved) that their low condition was eſtabliſhed to ſupport us in the proud diſtinction of abundance, it muſt greatly inflame our guilt, and increaſe our confuſion. For to the Poor it is, that we are immediately, and almoſt ſolely, indebted for every advantage of eaſe and pleaſure, which improved and refined ſociety affords; (advantages which we are but too apt to eſteem the principal bleſſings of ſociety) it being by their inceſſant toil that the elegances of polite and faſhionable

SERM. 4.

life are procured for us. While all the reward They have, for becoming benefactors to the Great and Wealthy, is but the hard and ſcanty ſuſtenance of a miſerable Being. A Being only leſs miſerable than That, which the inſolent Rich-man himſelf muſt have been content to drag in a life unaſſiſted by the ſweat and ingenuity of the Labourer and Artificer. For were it not for the inceſſant drugery of the Poor, we ſhould ſoon be brought back again, even amidſt our largeſt accumulations of fortune, to a condition of diſtreſs which would ſoon wipe out all that odious circumſtance of inſolent compariſon, from whence ariſes this mean, this vile, this unmanly contempt for the lower ſtations of our fellow-citizens.

But what is alone ſufficient to ſtrike us with horror at ſo wretched an inhumanity, is the conſideration of thoſe numerous diſorders of body, thoſe Maladies, to which a reſtleſs application of all their faculties for the ſupplial of our imaginary, and therefore endleſs wants, perpetually ſubjects the induſtrious Poor. How, by toiling in purſuit of commodities, they themſelves are never to enjoy, Some are confined to the peſtilential damps of mines; and Others expoſed to the rage of elementary, and ſolar fires: Theſe doomed to ſtruggle with the various inclemencies of diſtempered air: and Thoſe, to undergo the rotten vapours of fenny waters, or the corroſive humidity of the ocean: Here a too ſedentary occupation viciates the torpid fluids; and there, a too violent deſtroys the overſtretch-

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ed tone of the ſolids: The baleful materials em- SERM.
ployed, or worked upon, often ſtrike the artiſt 4.
with acute diſtempers; and the manner or me-
thod of working as often draws on chronical:
ſo that the ſhop of the artificer may be truly
called the warehouſe of Death. The maladies,
which ſwarm ſo thick and conſtant in it, have
even afforded matter for the charitable Phyſician
to compoſe diſtinct works of the *Diſeaſes of*
Artificers[a]: Where we find the diſtempers of
each Labourer to be as numerous as the Tools
he works with; and as peculiar as the materials
he employs.

Such then is the nature of the crime ſo ſevere-
ly condemned in my text; and ſuch the circum-
ſtances which ſo deeply aggravate it. The ſerious
conſideration of theſe things will be abundantly
ſufficient to confound the pride of Opulence,
and ſhame the Rich-man into thoſe duties to
God and his Brother, which his STATION more
indiſpenſably requires; that very circumſtance
which, to the diſhonour of human nature, he
hath ſuffered to miſlead him into ſo ſcandalous a
violation of both.

This ſalutary humiliation will lead him eaſily
back into the road of Piety and Charity. He
will grow warm with gratitude to his *Maker*,
and ſoften with compaſſion for his brother.
But gratitude and compaſſion, which ſtop at ac-
knowledgments and commiſeration, are as great
an inſult on God and Man, as that more open
mockery condemned in my text.

[a] *Bernardini Ramazini De morbis Artificum.*

SERM. 4. The only acceptable way, of teſtifying our repentance, in an impious age ſo forward to cavil at the ordinance of Providence, is to diſcharge thoſe duties which have a natural tendency to vindicate its ways. God hath given us every encouragement, to perform them. He hath put it in the power even of miſerable man, and how great is that honour! to juſtify the œconomy of his ſyſtem: For the faithful diſcharge of what our various relations to our Fellow-creatures require of us, will repair all thoſe deformities of defect and exceſs, which nature or fortune is for ever caſting over the fair face of Creation. For what is it (in the opinion of impious men) that ſo greatly diſcredits the diſpenſations of Providence, but that ſtate of miſery to which the bulk of mankind is condemned, in order to ſupport the Few in the full tide of wantonneſs and riot? Would the Rich once begin to think themſelves the diſpenſators of Providence, for the Poor, Impiety would ſoon be forced to confeſs, that the goods of fortune, tho' unequally divided, were yet wiſely and graciouſly adminiſtred: All men would ſee, that the pouring down wealth on high ſtations was only a ſacred depoſite to ſupply the wants and diſtreſſes of the low: Wants very wiſely impoſed, as a neceſſary means of producing thoſe accommodations which Man's improved nature indiſpenſably requires.

This,

This, and this only can attone for the enor- SERM.
mity condemned in my text. This will sup- 4.
port the Order, and is consequently the best vindication of the Oeconomy of Providence; which wants nothing to render it as respectable to the world, as it is illustrious in itself, but this reasonable compliance to the common dictates of Humanity and Religion.

SERMON

SERMON V.

The Character and Office of the MESSIAH.

1 CORINTH. i. 30.

——JESUS CHRIST *who, of God, is made unto us* WISDOM *and* RIGHTEOUSNESS; *and* SANCTIFICATION *and* REDEMPTION.

SERM. 5

IN theſe memorable words, the Apoſtle, Paul, hath given us a full and exact Character of the Perſonage of the holy JESUS, and of the nature of that Religion he was ſent to propagate amongſt Men.

Wiſdom and *Righteouſneſs* deſcribe a MESSENGER ſent from God with the publication of the eternal Law of Truth and Right: and *Sanctification* and *Redemption* denote the MESSIAH foretold, who was to attone for man's tranſgreſſions, and to reſtore him to his loſt Inheritance.

Theſe two important matters, the firſt of which reſpects the WORKER; and the ſecond, his WORK; I propoſe to make the ſubject of the following Diſcourſe.

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I. SERM. 5.

The Jews, at the time of Chriſt's advent, were in full expectation of their long promiſed Meſſiah. So that, St. John tells us the multitude on their being miraculouſly fed by Jeſus, cried out, *this is of a truth that* PROPHET *that ſhould come into the world*[a]. And indeed, this judgment was ſuch a one as the People are generally wont to paſs; crude, undigeſted, and made up of a mixture of truth and falſhood. It was true, and they argued rightly, that the worker of this miracle was a PROPHET SENT from God. But it was falſe, and they were too haſty in concluding, that This was the proper proof of his being the PROPHET FORETOLD in their ſacred volumes. For tho' one of the marks of this Prophet, (as it muſt be one of every meſſenger ſent immediately from God) was the working Miracles; yet there were many other circumſtances, reſpecting both his time and perſon, which were to unite in that Character, before he could be ſaid, *to be, of a truth, that Prophet that ſhould come into the world.*

This, therefore, on the whole, muſt paſs for a popular prejudice in favour of the Son of God; but yet a Prejudice: Leſs unreaſonable, indeed, than many, they preſumed to entertain againſt him: As when they thought an idle Proverb ſufficient to controvert the ſtrongeſt evidence of his Meſſiah-character. *Can any thing good come out of Nazareth*, ſaith Nathanael, *an Iſraelite in whom there was no guile*[b], but as appears from hence, a great deal of fooliſh prejudice.

[a] Chap. vi. 14. [b] John i. 46, 47.

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SERM. 5. The two great Prophets of God, placed by him at the head of each of his Diſpenſations, were MOSES and JESUS. In this they differed, that Moſes bore the ſimple Character of a DIVINE MESSENGER; Jeſus, the more complex one of a DIVINE MESSENGER FORETOLD. For, tho' the deliverance of the ſeed of Abraham was predicted in the ſacred records along with the deliverance of the ſeed Adam; yet as the firſt was only a type and prelude of the other; it was not Moſes the deliverer of the Jews, but Jeſus the deliverer of mankind, the finiſher of God's great work of REDEMPTION, who had the diſtinguiſhed honour of being foretold; as well by intimation in a myſterious ritual, as by a more open declaration in the oracles of the Law and the Prophets.

However, the preliminary ground of credence was the ſame, in both; namely, that the doctrines they taught were WORTHY of God. This worth conſiſts in their TRUTH, and in their IMPORTANCE.

1. No Falſhood can iſſue from the fountain of Truth. Whatever therefore pretends to come from God, which contradicts our common notions of his Being and attributes, muſt of neceſſity be condemned for an impoſture, notwithſtanding any appearance of extraordinary power in the propagator of ſuch doctrines. And ſhould an Impoſture happen to be attended with theſe circumſtances of power, it could not be fairly deemed an imputation on God's goodneſs, ſince the holy ſpirit hath foretold, that deceivers ſhould come with *lying miracles*, almoſt of force to draw aſide

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the very elect themſelves; and ſince, againſt the illuſions of theſe deceivers, God hath given us ſo ſure a teſt and criterion as are the common notions concerning his Being and Attributes. SERM. 5.

2. Nor is it, in the ſecond place, a ſufficient ground of credence, that what is thus taught be ſimply true. It muſt be truth of importance. Such as in its immediate tendency reſpects the *good of man*, and in its ultimate, the *glory of God*. Theſe are the neceſſary qualities of ſuch doctrines as we eſteem WORTHY the extraordinary patronage of Heaven.

This then, may be called the preliminary ground of Credence, but not the CREDENTIAL itſelf. An important Truth is indeed worthy of God. But neither the Truth, nor the importance of it ſhews, that it had God for its immediate Author. Becauſe it is impoſſible to meaſure the bounds of human capacity, or to aſcertain what progreſs an improved underſtanding may make in the diſcovery of divine and moral truths. We have been told indeed, but by men of no great authority, "That the proper credentials of a divine miſſion are the truth and importance of the doctrine propoſed." But in this they are neither ingenuous nor ſerious. They hold no extraordinary Revelation at all. So that this is only one of their DISGUISED SENTENCES; which, like moſt others from the ſame quarter, is conveyed under an equivocal expreſſion, confounding common ſpeech, and making TRUTH and DIVINE TRUTH the ſame thing.

The proper Credential, therefore, of a Meſſenger from God is the POWER OF WORKING MIRA-

SERM. V. CLES. A ſort of evidence fitted to the capacity of all men. For the difference between true and falſe miracles, that is, between what we ſhould admit and what we ſhould reject, does not conſiſt in the firſt's being the finger of God; and the other, the operation of a finite Being: for then, man, who knows ſo little of the material and intellectual world, would have no criterion to diſtinguiſh between the true and falſe: But the difference conſiſts in this, That true miracles are ſuch as are worked in confirmation of doctrines worthy of God; and falſe, ſuch as aim to ſupport doctrines unworthy of him. Our ſecurity for the firſt concluſion is the goodneſs and juſtice of God, which will never ſuffer us, (I do not mean the *good* in diſtinction to the *bad*, which is, a low, and foreign conſideration, but mankind in general) to be brought into a ſituation where no human means can be found to prevent our falling into error. Our ſecurity for the ſecond, is the certainty that immoral doctrines could never come from God; and the uncertainty what power other agents may have to produce appearances contrary to the common courſe of nature.

This ſeems to be the true notion of a MIRACLE, as it ſubjects all which pretend to that character, to the deciſion of human judgment; every man being able to diſtinguiſh between what is done in confirmation of doctrines worthy of God, and what is done to ſupport doctrines unworthy of him. As on the other hand, that which defines a Miracle to be the immediate work of God, muſt needs be a falſe notion of it, becauſe it would render the credential of Miracles an inſufficient

ſufficient ſecurity, by reducing us to an inabili- SERM.
ty of diſtinguiſhing between the true and the 5.
falſe.

On the whole, then, we conclude, that MIRACLES are the full Credential of a SIMPLE MESSENGER from God: ſuch as we ſuppoſe MOSES to be.

But, now, ſomething more is neceſſary to eſtabliſh the complicated Character of a MESSENGER FORETOLD, ſuch a one as JESUS challenged to himſelf.

It is not enough for ſuch a Character that he works the moſt amazing Miracles; unleſs, at the ſame time, he be found to have thoſe various marks upon him which belong to the Meſſenger foretold. For having aſſumed both parts of the prophetick Character, and united them in his own perſon, he is no longer at liberty to disjoin and prove them ſingly: ſo as that, when by miracles he hath eſtabliſhed the Character of a *divine* Meſſenger, this will remain unſhaken, tho' he ſhould fail in proving himſelf, by other evidence, the Meſſenger *foretold*. For not only all falſhood is incongruous to a divine miſſion, but is diſſociable with all truth. Whatever ſupernatural evidence, therefore, is produced by ſuch a perſonage, comes in equally in atteſtation of both parts of his Character: and if it fail in one, cannot be made to ſupport the other.

Now Miracles can be no proof of his being the Meſſenger foretold, when his perſon, actions, and fortunes agree not, in all circumſtances, with the prophetic deſcriptions of that Meſſenger. For Miracles cannot change times and places; or make

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SERM. 5. that to be, which is not, and that not to be, which is.

From hence, therefore, we draw this ſecond concluſion, "that Miracles were not the full, or only, credentials of Jeſus, who was a Meſſenger foretold." There needed another kind of evidence to eſtabliſh his pretenſions: and that was, that he exactly anſwered to the deſcription of the predicted MESSIAH, or, in other words, that he accompliſhed the Prophecies concerning him. And this we ſay he did in the ampleſt manner.

But now it may be asked, "Were his Miracles of no uſe to eſtabliſh his Meſſiah-Character?"

The anſwer will lead us to the ſecond part of what we are to ſpeak to: The nature of thoſe ancient prophecies which foretell the promiſed Meſſiah of the Jews.

We have obſerved that the office of this Meſſiah was to compleat and perfect God's great work of REDEMPTION; to which, all his various diſpenſations to mankind were directed. As therefore Jeſus was the finiſher of the whole Oeconomy, it is natural to ſuppoſe that neither the worker nor his work would be forgotten under any of thoſe diſpenſations. This is indeed the fact: He is remembered under all of them, tho' in a manner conformable to the ſpecific nature of each. Thus when he is revealed to Adam, the repreſentative of human kind, he is ſpoken of as the deſtroyer of their ſpiritual enemy who ſhould *bruiſe the head of the Serpent*[a]: when promiſed

[a] Gen. iii. 15.

to

to the Patriarchal family, he is repreſented as the glory and bleſſing of their Race, the *Shiloh, to whom ſhould be the gathering of the people* [b]. And when to the Moſaic Republic; as a *Prophet* and Lawgiver *like to* its firſt founder [c]. So that in all theſe graphical deſcriptions, tho' the drawing was the ſame, yet as the colouring was different, this would be one ſource of obſcurity. SERM. 5.

Again, as each diſpenſation was preparatory to what ſucceeded, the relation between the type and antitype occaſioned the prophecies concerning the ſucceeding diſpenſation to be intermixed with others reſpecting the fortunes of the preſent. Thus, for inſtance, the ſpiritual victories of the Meſſiah, are intermixed with the temporal deliverances atchieved under the jewiſh Leaders. And this is another ſource of obſcurity.

Laſtly, the Chriſtian Diſpenſation is in its nature entirely oppoſite to the Jewiſh; and yet the prophetic account of it is conveyed under ideas altogether appropriate to the LAW. But this, by the wiſeſt deſignation of providence. One important part of Jeſus' his office was to break down the partition-wall between Jews and Gentiles, to extend the privilege of being the ſelect people of God to all the race of Adam, to free his countrymen from the bondage of the ceremonial Law, to teach all men the worſhip of God *in ſpirit and in truth*; in a word, to change temporal bleſſings into eternal. But, at the time of making thoſe predictions, the Moſaic ſyſtem had not run out half its courſe: and ſo was not to be expoſed to popular contempt, by an information

[b] Gen. xlix. 10. [c] Deut. xviii. 15.

SERM. 5. that it was only the harſh rudiment of one more eaſy and perfect. Now an exact and plain deſcription of the Meſſiah's office, which would have told the people this ſecret, muſt needs have indiſpoſed them to the reverence due to their LAW. A myſterious repoſe, therefore, was to be caſt over theſe *living Oracles*, which ſhould preſent no more to the dull conceptions of the People, than a large increaſe of bleſſings, to be procured in the *age to come*, by ſome mighty Deliverer. And the expedients employed for this purpoſe bear the cleareſt marks of the divinity of their Author.

The firſt was in the EXPRESSION; by repreſenting thoſe ſpiritual bleſſings figuratively, under the carnal terms of the Law. Civil peace, national triumphs, and worldly plenty, to denote religious rectitude, victory over ſin and death, and large effuſion of the Holy Spirit.

The ſecond expedient was in the SENSE. For it being neceſſary to the carrying on the general ſcheme of Providence, of which the Moſaic inſtitution made ſo conſiderable a part, that the various fortunes and illuſtrious deliverers under this diſpenſation ſhould, from time to time, be foretold for the conſolation of thoſe to whom the propheſy was delivered; and for the truſt and confidence of poſterity which ſhould ſee it fulfilled; for this end, I ſay, the Holy Spirit made uſe of theſe intermediate events for types and ſymbols of the ſufferings and victories of the Meſſiah, the final object of Prophecy. This all-wiſe contrivance of Providence produced what Divines call the

the SECONDARY SENSE OF PROPHECY [d]. And of this ſpecies is the body of thoſe predictions which relate to the Meſſiah. SERM. 5.

Theſe two expedients therefore are another ſource of myſterious obſcurity.

What now are the inferences which muſt be drawn from the NATURE OF ANCIENT PROPHECY, as here explained? They are theſe.

1. That the only reaſonable way of eſtabliſhing the evidence riſing from it, is to ſet the various predictions together, to compare them with one another, and to illuſtrate what is obſcure in *this* Prophecy with what is clear in *that*; to reconcile the ſeeming diſcordancy in particular parts by the order, union, and harmony which reſults from the general oeconomy of the whole.

2. The ſecond inference is, that even after all the advantages gained by the uſe of this method, there will ſtill remain many obſcurities in particular prophecies, which human wit alone will never be able to remove or clear up.

But in contradiction to the firſt inference we have been lately told, "That Prophecies are to be conſidered and inforced like Miracles, ſingly and independently, as ſo many diſtinct arguments: and that to conſider them in a chain, and as having a mutual connection with one another, is a fanciful and romantic ſyſtem, which deſerts the foundation laid by the Evangeliſts for their explanation [e].

[d] See *Div. Leg.* Book vi. Sect. 6.

[e] ——"The Evangeliſts applied them [the Prophecies] "ſingly and independently on each other, to this or that occa- "ſion, as ſo many different arguments for the general truth of "the

SERM. 5. But the Objector ſeems not ſufficiently to have conſidered the very different natures of theſe two extraordinary interpoſitions of Providence, in ſupport of its diſpenſations, MIRACLES and PROPHECIES.

Single Miracles refer to no Whole or Syſtem. Each is independent of another, and hath its own entire evidence in itſelf. If we conſider a miracle, as in the object of the performer, it is ſimply the credential to a divine miſſion: if we conſider it as directed to its ſubject, it is a diſplay of the wiſdom, the juſtice, or the goodneſs of that Being by whoſe power it is performed. And in either caſe, it carries its evidence along with it, and receives no aid or addition from without. Indeed it would be abſurd to ſeek it in any other place. For, put the miracles as near together as you will, and embody them as cloſely as you can, the ſtronger will give no ſupport to the weaker. When Jeſus rebuked [f] the winds and the waves, and a calm enſued; If any one ſhould pretend, that the quiet naturally followed the emotion, and was not the immediate effect of divine power, the urging his walk upon the Sea [g] would not remove the objection. So again, when Peter [h] raiſed Dorcas from the dead, Should an unbeliever ſay, ſhe was only in a ſwoon, the urging the re-

" the Goſpel.—He [the Bp. of L.] " ſeems to have rejected " the whole evidence of Prophecy as it was underſtood and ap- " plied by the Apoſtles and Evangeliſts; and, to have ſubſtitu- " ted, in its place, a romantic ſyſtem or fanciful chain of an- " tediluvian Predictions."—Dr. Middleton's *Examination of the Bp. of London's Diſcourſe concerning the uſe and intent of Prophecy*, p. 5. 8.

[f] Matth. viii. 26. [g] Matth. xiv. 26. [h] Acts ix. 41.

ſtoration

ſtoration of Lazarus, after he had been dead four days [i], would hardly ſilence the cavil. The reaſon is plain, and the ſame in both caſes. The ſimiliar Miracles had no dependance on one another. SERM. 5.

The Prophecies on the contrary, tho', like the Miracles, they may be conſidered ſingly and apart; and the peculiar object of many of them be clearly fixed from their own evidence; yet the truth of the greater part, and the fulleſt conviction in all, ariſe from their being ſeen in one view, and conſidered as a dependent, connected, and entire Whole; becauſe the general object of all is one compleat Diſpenſation, conſiſting of various and ſubordinate parts, which reflect mutual light and add mutual luſtre to one another. Hence the clearer Prophecies muſt always communicate of their evidence to the more obſcure. Thus if any one ſhould doubt over what part of God's moral diſpenſation the Meſſiah ſhould reign, whether the Jewiſh or Evangelic, when he is propheſied of in the words—*Yet have I ſet my King upon my holy Hill of Zion* [k]; he may be fully ſatisfied by the Prophecy of Jeremiah: *Behold the day* is come, ſaith the Lord, that I will make *a* NEW COVENANT *with the houſe of Iſrael, not according to the covenant that I made with their Fathers, &c.—But—I will put my* LAW INTO THEIR INWARD PARTS, *and write it in their Hearts* [l].

And the reaſon of this difference is evident: The ſubject of prophecies is ONE; and the ſubject of miracles are MANY.

[i] John xi. 39. [k] Pſal. ii. 6. [l] Chap. xxxi. 31.

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In oppoſition therefore to ſo plain a truth, it would be idle to tell us, "That Jeſus and his Diſciples employed the Prophecies ſingly and independently on each other, to this or that occaſion, as ſo many different arguments for the general truth of the Goſpel." We own they may be thus employed: and when they are ſo, they are conſidered under the nature of Miracles, and urged, as the objector well expreſſes it, *for the general truth of the Goſpel.* But what then? If, becauſe there are ſome prophecies plain and clear enough to ſtand alone, on the principles of thoſe to whom they were addreſſed, and therefore the Evangeliſts have put them into that poſition; muſt the dark and obſcure ones, which require the aid of others to ſupport them, be treated in the ſame manner? Are we not rather to conclude that their different circumſtances require a different management? This is ſo far from deſerting the foundation of the Evangeliſts [m], that it is proſecuting divine knowledge upon the ſame principles. Theſe very Evangeliſts employ ſingle maxims of morality, independent on each other. But is this any proof that there is no ſyſtem of morals? Or that our urging thoſe truths ſyſtematically, and under all their dependancies, which the Evangeliſts propoſed ſingly and without connection, is a *deſerting the foundations of the Goſpel?*

Would you have the whole truth? it is this: the fitteſt way of conveying inſtruction to the People, whether prophetical or moral, was to urge

[m] "It is certain there was no occaſion to deſert that foundation which the Evangeliſts had laid, and to take refuge in a precarious ſyſtem." *Exam. of the Bp. of Lond.* p. 24.

their

their verities ſingly and independently. For long deductions and chains of reaſoning were unſuitable to the capacities of thoſe with whom Jeſus and his diſciples were concerned. But *ſyſtematical and political Divines* (as they are here called) were engaged with Philoſophers and Free-thinkers. And the fitteſt way of urging Prophecies and moral truths to ſuch, was to propoſe them ſyſtematically and in a chain. For it had been pretended that certain Scripture-prophecies have no ſupport from fact; and that certain Goſpel-precepts have no foundation in reaſon. SERM. 5.

2. We come now to the ſecond conſequence reſulting from the nature of Prophecy. And this is, that there will be ſtill many difficulties in particular Prophecies, which mere human wit, with all the aſſiſtance of ſcience, will never be able to remove.

And here comes in the anſwer which we promiſed to give to the queſtion "concerning the uſe of Miracles to eſtabliſh the Meſſiah-Character?"

And this we ſhall venture to make in the affirmative; and to declare, that they are of great uſe.

It hath been already obſerved, that no miracles are ſufficient to prove thoſe Prophecies to relate to Jeſus, which, on the logical rules of interpretation can be plainly ſhewn to relate only to another: becauſe Miracles cannot make that to be true, which is falſe.

But the concluſion is very different in matters which human wiſdom muſt leave for ever in doubt; and which, on account of the obſcure delivery

SERM. 5. of the Prophecy, Reaſon finds itſelf unable to reſolve. In this caſe, the word of an infallible Interpreter (and ſuch we muſt eſteem him who is endowed with the power that Jeſus exerciſed) hath all the authority requiſite to decide in doubtful queſtions. Human wiſdom cannot reſolve which of two things was in the Speaker's meaning; but the wiſdom reſiding in that Agent, to whom God hath imparted the knowledge of all divine myſteries, can reſolve it; and the Miracles of Jeſus ſhew that this knowledge was communicated to him.

And AUTHORITY hath here the force of the moſt convincing evidence. Common reaſon, in the affairs of civil life hath always directed men to the like ſolution. In all their doubts they have recourſe to ſuperior wiſdom. On this, they regulate their conduct, and reſt ſatisfied in the ſecurity of its deciſion. The Authority in queſtion, to fix the ſenſe of doubtful Prophecies, differs only in this, that the evidence of the reſolved truth is unſpeakably greater, as divine wiſdom exceeds human.

And we have the ſame ſecurity, (infinite Goodneſs) that we ſhall be kept from error, when Miracles are employed to fix the ſenſe of doubtful Prophecies, as when more generally applied to ſupport the character of a divine Meſſenger. Miracles being a ſpecies of evidence which reaſon directs us to confide in, as well in one caſe as in the other.

With regard therefore to Prophecies thus circumſtanced, we ſay, that the authority of a worker of miracles may be fitly applied to ſhew, that

that *he is of a truth that* PROPHET *that ſhould come into the world.* SERM. 5.

So that we ſee, licentious writers from Porphyry down to Collins, have miſemployed their pains in proving, "That the Prophecies which are ſaid to concern the Meſſiah are ſo indeterminate, that on the common rules of interpretation, we can never apply them with certainty rather to him than to any other Jewiſh Deliverer." For was it true, as it certainly is not, all that could be inferred from thence is only this, That ſuch Prophecies conclude nothing in favour of a particular application, till the obſcurities ariſing from the intermediate manner in which they are delivered, be removed. There are ſome obſcurities which no human lights can penetrate, but there are none ſo impervious but muſt give way to the divine.

It is the proper reſort, therefore, of ſuperior wiſdom to decide this doubtful queſtion, and tell us, to whom ſuch Prophecies belong.

And muſt not He who inſpired the Oracle, know of whom he made the prediction? For it was the ſame ſpirit who caſt a myſterious veil over Truth in the jewiſh Prophecies, and became manifeſt in the chriſtian Miracles. Thus much theſe licentious writers themſelves will be forced to own, while they reaſon, as they do here, on the ſuppoſition of real Prophecies; and only pretend to bring in queſtion their received meaning.

On the whole, therefore, we conclude, That to clear up doubtful Prophecies by the application of Miracles, is a ſpecies of evidence which determines the judgment with as perfect aſſurance, as if the prediction had been conceived in the plaineſt

SERM. 5. plaineſt terms of grammar, and in the directeſt propoſitions of logic.

But the miſtake lay here, The enemies of our Faith ſaw clearly enough that Miracles could not eſtabliſh a ſenſe of Prophecies in oppoſition to all human rules of interpretation; and therefore concluded that Miracles had no influence on Prophecy at all. This was too haſty. They ſaw in what caſe the authority of Miracles was excluded; but they would not ſee where it came in: and ſo, becauſe a Miracle could not do every thing in eſtabliſhing the Meſſiah-character, they would ſuffer it to do nothing.

But let us leave the perverſity of men, to adore the good Providence of God; whoſe POWER, in the uſe of Miracles, is ſo admirably fitted to ſupply and clear up the defects and obſcurities, which his WISDOM ſuffered to remain in the Prophecies.

II.

Having explained and vindicated the Character of this laſt great Meſſenger of God; the ſubject leads me to conſider the nature and genius of the Religion he was ſent to propagate amongſt men. So that having ſeen the TRUTH of his Miſſion, we may now underſtand the USE and NECESSITY of his Work.

St. Paul, in the words of my text, hath marked out thoſe eſſential qualities which diſtinguiſh the CHARACTER and OFFICE of Jeſus from all other, whether true or pretended, Meſſengers from God. *Jeſus Chriſt*, ſays he, *is made unto us Wiſdom and Righteouſneſs; and Sanctification and Redemption.* Now as this was addreſſed both to the

the Gentile and Jewiſh converts in the church of Corinth, it is contrived to ſhew, in one view, how Chriſtianity hath reformed the depravities of PAGANISM, and ſupplied the deficiencies of the LAW. SERM. 5.

This beautiful ſummary of Goſpel-bleſſings (for now we turn from the Worker to his work) is ſo artfully adapted to the Writer's views and purpoſes, as will deſerve a particular explanation.

And here let me previouſly obſerve, That tho' the *Wiſdom* and *Righteouſneſs*,—the *Sanctification* and *Redemption*, here mentioned, be each reſpective to the whole race of mankind; yet the GENTILES are more particularly concerned in the WISDOM and RIGHTEOUSNESS; and the JEWS in the SANCTIFICATION and REDEMPTION. In explaining, therefore, theſe four eſſential offices in the Meſſiah character, I ſhall conſider each of them as referring diſtinctly and particularly to the One or Other of theſe two great diviſions of the religious world.

I. And firſt, concerning the reformation of the GENTILES, by Goſpel *Wiſdom* and *Righteouſneſs*.

1. *Jeſus Chriſt*, ſaith the Apoſtle, is *made unto us*, WISDOM. That is, He was *made* Wiſdom unto the Gentile world by inſtructing it in the knowledge of the true God; his nature and attributes: And by explaining the relation in which man ſtands to his Maker. A WISDOM, which, at this time, the Gentiles greatly wanted: moſt of them being deſtitute of that knowledge:

SERM. 5. ledge; and all, without exception, ignorant of that relation.

The early deſcendants of Noah ſoon loſt the revealed knowledge of their Creator. Which tho' indeed revived by an extraordinary diſpenſation of Providence, was however confined within the gates of a ſingle family: while the reſt of mankind, partly by two great a confidence in that unfaithful guardian of Truth, TRADITION; and partly from too little attention to their better inſtructor, REASON, fell into the moſt ſenſeleſs Idolatries.

For living at firſt ſcattered abroad in independent tribes, their groſs, untutored minds could riſe no higher than to the ſenſible cauſes of good and evil: the moſt conſiderable of which being the elements and heavenly bodies. Theſe became the firſt object of their worſhip and veneration. And having experienced them to be, ſometimes, the authors of health and plenty; and ſometimes again, of peſtilence and famine, they from thence began to entertain an opinion of good and evil Demons.

But being now collected into Bodies, and formed into Communities; the ſudden ſupplial of all the wants of life, which followed, was ſo ſenſibly underſtood, that miſtaken gratitude took another channel, and turned as ſtrongly on their deceaſed Lawgivers, the generous procurers of this their improved condition; whom they ſoon venerated and exalted into Gods.

But as civil life introduced and encouraged the culture of the mind as well as body; both the firſt, and ſecond mode of worſhip were, from their

their manifeſt abſurdities, in danger of falling under the popular contempt. To prevent this miſchief, the Legiſlator diverted the ſteddy attention to either, by confounding them together; making ELEMENTARY and HERO-WORSHIP repreſentative of one another; and then laying on a new cover over both, by the invention of a third ſpecies of idolatry, SYMBOLICAL of the other two. But a further account of this matter, and how the two original and ſimple forms produced that more monſtrous compound; in which, firſt of all, brutes, and then, ſtocks and ſtones were worſhiped;—from what accidents of error, from what contrivances of fraud, theſe prodigies aroſe, which hath ſince given ſo much exerciſe to the learned, all this is without the limits of the preſent diſcourſe [a]. Let it ſuffice to obſerve, that St. Paul hath not aggravated the caſe, where, in his Epiſtle to the Romans, he ſays, that the Gentile world had *changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beaſts, and creeping things* [b].

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This was the condition of the Pagan world in general. And tho', from time to time, ſome thinking men aroſe amongſt them of a more enlarged underſtanding than the common, who, as the ſame Apoſtle obſerves, could, from the *viſible things* of a created world, infer the *eternal power and Godhead* [c] of its Author; yet even theſe, as he adds, when *they knew God, glorified him not as God* [d]; never ſo much as once attempting to introduce his worſhip to any People

[a] See the *Div. Leg.* B. iv. [b] Ch. i. v. 23. [c] v. 20. [d] v. 21.

or

SERM. 5. or Nation amongſt whom they lived, or where they had the greateſt credit. So that the one true God, tho' KNOWN in moſt places, was no where publicly WORSHIPED but in the land of Judæa only.

This leads me to the ſecond point, "The univerſal ignorance in the Gentile world, of the relation in which man ſtands to his Creator." The Philoſophers and Lawgivers had concurred in a general opinion (the abſurdity of which is ſufficiently expoſed by the ſucceſs of the hebrew Sage and Legiſlator in a different conduct) that to teach publicly the knowledge, or to eſtabliſh nationally the worſhip of the one true God, would be of great diſſervice to ſociety; and had therefore kept all conſideration of him incloſed within the veil of their MYSTERIES. And further, to hide from their own conſciences the fraud and prevarication of ſuch a meaſure, they firſt brought thoſe whom they had intruſted with that knowledge, and afterwards, themſelves to believe, That the FIRST CAUSE was an extra-mundane Being, too excellent, as well as too remote, to be approached, and addreſſed to, in the firſt inſtance. On which account, they ſaid, he had delegated the government of the world to inferior Deities, his ſubſtitutes; and had made Them the immediate objects of religious worſhip. In cultivating this ſuperſtition they found another advantage: it gave a ſhew of reaſon to that ſenſeleſs Polytheiſm whoſe riſe and progreſs we have juſt deſcribed: and, at the ſame time, ſcreened it from the approaches of over-curious inquirers. But then it could not fail of producing very fatal miſtakes concerning

concerning the close and near relation in which man stands towards God. SERM. 5.

All this shews how expedient it was for the happiness of Mankind, that *Jesus* should *be made, unto us, wisdom*; when the most enlightened teachers of it amongst the Gentiles *professing themselves to be wise became fools*, by their *not glorifying him as God* whom they had clearly discovered to be the only true one.

Let us now see the need the Jews had of this *wisdom*; for tho', as was said, it be principally objective to the state of the Gentile world, yet it hath its after-view to the followers of the Law; who wanted, likewise, tho' not in the same degree, the aid of *Evangelic wisdom*. For the Character of a national, tutelary Deity, under which, God had been pleased to assume the patronage of their idolatrous Forefathers in Egypt; the Form of their civil constitution, which was Theocratical; and the Genius of their ceremonial worship, which was fitted, thro' the grossness of their prejudices, to secure the great end of their separation, preservation from idolatry; all these, I say, concurred, amongst a perverse people to beget wrong notions of the ATTRIBUTES OF GOD; as if They stood by nature, or adoption, in a nearer relation to him than the rest of their fellow-creatures; being chosen for the objects of his special care, on account of some inherent excellence; or at least for some secret fondness which God had, and would indulge, for the illustrious race of Abraham. Vain notions, and of dangerous consequence! which, tho' they received no real support from *Moses and the Prophets*, were yet, by length

SERM. 5. length of time, ſo rooted and interwoven in the paſſions and affections of that people, as to need a *new Law* to weed them out.

And thus was *Jeſus* indeed *made Wiſdom* both to Jew and Gentile; by inſtructing the ignorance of the one, and reforming the error of the other, in that ſupreme ſpecies of Wiſdom, the knowledge of the true God.

2. The advantages of his being *made, unto us*, RIGHTEOUSNESS come next to be conſidered.

As the ignorance of, and miſtakes concerning, the FIRST CAUSE were ſo univerſal in the Gentile world, it can hardly be ſuppoſed that the ſtate of VIRTUE was in any very good condition amongſt them. And in fact, we find that their Morality was neither ſpeculatively ſolid, nor practically ſincere.

The fitneſs of ſome actions and the unfitneſs of others, are diſcoverable from the NATURAL RELATIONS and eſſential difference of things. And this fitneſs and unfitneſs are further ſupported by a MORAL SENSE, or an inſtinctive approbation of good, and diſlike of evil. But ſtill, the proper ground of moral obligation is the WILL of GOD: Becauſe all obligation implies an obliger; and *moral fitneſs* is only a rule to direct us to the will of the obliger; nor is the *moral ſenſe* any other than his arbitrary impreſſion, to diſpoſe the human will to a conformity with the divine. The Will of God, therefore, is the real ground of obligation; or that which properly maketh man accountable for his actions[a].

[a] See *Div. Leg.* Book i. Sect. 4.

Now

Now this only ſolid foundation of morality the Gentile world always wanted: and indeed, while under the ignorance and miſtakes mentioned above, could not but want. For their falſe Gods haing, as muſt needs be, from the private views and intrigues of the Prieſts their interpreters, many different and contrary Wills, theſe could never be made the ground of a conſiſtent morality: and the true God being eſteemed an extramundane Being, who left his Government to others, afforded no WILL at all, for this purpoſe. So that their only recourſe for inſtruction and practice was to the MORAL SENSE, and NATURAL RELATIONS of things; which, tho' they might preſent a ſpecious ſyſtem to the underſtanding, had not weight or authority to incline the Will[r].

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For their practice of Virtue (to come to the ſecond point) was as impure as it was unſtable. In morals, Example hath the ſtrongeſt influence: and this influence increaſeth in proportion to the dignity of the ſubject in which it is found. The Example of the Deity, therefore, which inforceth itſelf on a principle of Religion, muſt needs have the ſtrongeſt and wideſt influence. But the actions of the Pagan Gods, recorded in their ſacred ſtories, were ſo immoral as could not but highly corrupt the practice of their worſhipers. And Antiquity informs us, that in truth it did ſo.

Nor ſhould a moral cauſe of this degeneracy from Virtue be forgotten. St. Paul aſſures us that God, for their puniſhment *in not retaining him in their knowledge, gave them over to a reprobate mind, to* DO *thoſe things that are not convenient.*

[r] See *Div. Leg.* as above.

SERM. 5. Hence, as he tells us, they were *filled with all* UNRIGHTEOUSNESS, *fornication, wickedneſs, covetouſneſs, maliciouſneſs*[s], etc. The account goes on, in ſo black a catalogue of vice, as ſufficiently ſhews that, at the time *Jeſus Chriſt was made unto us righteouſneſs*, the Pagan world was ſunk into the loweſt ſtate of miſery and corruption.

Nor were the Jews themſelves ſo ſound, in theſe particulars, as not to want this great Phyſician of the Soul. And what was ſaid of the *Wiſdom* is true of the *Righteouſneſs*, mentioned in my text; it hath a ſecondary reference to the choſen People. For, the wrong notions they had conceived of the *God of their fathers*, and of the relation in which they ſtood to him, had much viciated and deformed their ſocial virtue. They confined the precept of loving their Brother to the deſcendants of their fraternal Tribes; and neglected and deſpiſed the reſt of the ſons of Adam; who, becauſe ritually unholy and prophane, were deemed to be naturally unrelated to them. A Principle which made them as unfaithful ſubjects, when for their crimes they were ſentenced to the yoke of the Gentiles, as they were mercileſs neighbours while independent and more powerful; neither *rendering to Cæſar the things which were Cæſar's*; nor to God the things which at all times he principally required of them,—*to do juſtly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly* before him[t]. This, and other errors which their falſe Traditions had introduced, and which ſome original compliances with the *hardneſs of their*

[s] Rom. ch. i. ver. 28, & ſeq. [t] Micah ch. vi. ver. 8.

hearts

hearts had occaſionally countenanced, made Jeſus tells his followers, that *unleſs their* RIGHTEOUSNESS *ſhould exceed the* RIGHTEOUSNESS *of the Scribes and Phariſees, they ſhould in no caſe enter into the kingdom of Heaven*[n]. SERM. 5.

From what hath been ſaid then it appears, that Jeſus, as he *is made unto us, wiſdom and righteouſneſs*, is to be conſidered under the Character of a MESSENGER SENT from God, to inſtruct men in the ways of RELIGION and VIRTUE. How much ſuch a one was wanting, we have endeavoured to ſhew in a fair repreſentation of the ſtate of BOTH, at the time of his coming.

II. But this was not the whole of his Character. He was a MSESENGER FORETOLD; as appears, and is inſinuated from what is further ſaid of him, That he was *made unto us Sanctification and Redemption.*

To ſuch as are unacquainted with the preſent ſtate of Theology amongſt us, it may perhaps ſeem ſtrange that I ſhould ſtop, in this place, to obſerve, that *Sanctification* and *Redemption* are as true and eſſential offices in the Character of Jeſus, and as extenſive to Mankind, as the *Wiſdom* and *Righteouſneſs* aſſigned unto it. But there are ſome amongſt us, who give a figurative ſenſe to the latter attributes in my text; and in reality confine the character of Jeſus to that of a Meſſenger ſent from God, to inſtruct the world in the truths of religious *Wiſdom*, and moral *Righteouſneſs*.

But to ſuppoſe, that when the Son of God is ſaid to be *made wiſdom and righteouſneſs*, we

[n] Matth. ch. v. ver. 20.

SERM. 5. must understand by it that he really taught men *Wisdom* and *Righteousness*; and yet, when he is said to be *made sanctification and redemption*, he did not really *sanctify* and *redeem*; but that, by instructing men in a more pure and perfect worship, he only excelled all the IMAGINARY and abrogated all the CARNAL *sanctifications* and *redemptions*, both of Jews and Gentiles; to suppose this, I say, is the highest violation of all rational interpretation: and gives us a meaner idea of the eternal Son of God than a Pagan Sophist would have entertained of him on hearing St. Paul's first sermon at Athens. But this perversity can be charitably accounted for no otherwise than from a violent disgust these men have taken at some current explanations of the *doctrine of Redemption*; fitter indeed to discredit, than to confirm or recommend this fundamental principle of our holy Religion. But this is a matter which requires a different treatment. I shall consider it in its proper place [x]: and now proceed with the subject before us.

I have observed, that as *Wisdom* and *Righteousness* were principally addressed to the Gentiles; so *Sanctification* and *Redemption* were directed to the Jews. But as a regard to the Jewish people was not excluded in the former; so neither was a regard to the Gentiles excluded in the latter.

It is easily seen why the representation of Jesus's *being made unto us Wisdom and Righteousness* is particularly addressed to the Gentiles: They most wanted those blessings. Nor is it more difficult to apprehend why the representation of his being

[x] *Div. Leg.* Book ix.

made

nade unto us Sactification and Redemption is par- SERM.
icularly directed to the Jews: for in their cuſto- 5.
y were depoſited the *living Oracles*, which ex-
lain that ſtate and condition of man, from whence
riſes the neceſſity of *Sanctification* and *Redemp-*
ion.

I. But let us conſider the words as they lye in
rder. *Jeſus Chriſt* (ſays the Apoſtle) *was made*
nto us SANCTIFICATION; that is, he *ſanctified*,
r made us holy.

It was a received opinion in the ancient world
hat human nature had contracted a ſtain or pol-
ution: and that not only particular purifyings,
ut alſo ſome general *Sanctification* was neceſſary
o put man in a capacity of being reſtored to the
avour of the Deity. Whether this Opinion aroſe
rom the remains of a Tradition concerning the
ALL; or from every man's conſcious feeling of
is own diſorders; or whether both concurred to
ts eſtabliſhment, is very uncertain. However it had
hat tone of the voice of Nature, Univerſality.
And tho' it gave occaſion to infinite ſuperſtitions
n the rituals of national luſtrations, yet the neceſ-
ity of ſome real *Sanctification* ſeems fairly to be de-
duced from it.

When God, therefore, ſeparated the Jewiſh
people, the firſt object of their Legiſlator's mi-
niſtry was to render them pure and holy. And
s by reaſon of the inveteracy of their prejudi-
ces, and the groſſneſs of their apprehenſions, the
real means of purifying human nature were to be
conveyed under the cover of ſuch rites and cere-
monies as were then in uſe amongſt men; ſo be-
cauſe the common way of making a people, holy,

SERM. 5. was to adopt them into the protection of a tutelary God; and of rendering particulars, clean, was by ablutions and other cathartic rites; the Almighty was pleaſed to aſſume the titles of their national God, and regal Governor; and to inſtitute, in the offices of his worſhip luſtrations, and expiatory ſacrifices, as well for particulars as the Community. On theſe accounts it is that he tells them, *Ye ſhall be unto me a* KINGDOM OF PRIESTS, *and an holy nation*[a]: for the regal and ſacerdotal were the two peculiar characters of ancient *ſanctity*.

But the LAW *having only a ſhadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, could never make the comers thereunto perfect*[b]: therefore the true *Sanctification* of mankind was reſerved for the miniſtry of Jeſus; when being collected together into one people, under his government as LORD; and received into his protection by the *juſtification of faith* in him as MESSIAH, they became *a* ROYAL PRIESTHOOD *and an holy nation*[c] as the Apoſtle calls them, alluding to the title given to the Hebrews by Moſes; and transferring it to the Chriſtian Church in a completory ſenſe, as it was applied to the Jewiſh, in a typical.

But a matter of ſo high importance as the completion of God's religious diſpenſations, in the final *Sanctification* of mankind, will deſerve a fuller explanation.

When the *Sanctifier* (whoſe character and office cannot well be conſidered ſeparately) was ac-

[a] Exod. ch. xix. v. 6. [b] Heb. ch. x. v. 1.
[c] 1 Pet. ch. xi. v. 9.

cuſed,

cuſed, by thoſe who traverſed his miniſtry, of purpoſing to overturn the eſtabliſhed Religion, he anſwered, *Think not that I am come deſtroy the Law and the Prophets. I am not come to deſtroy, but to fulfil*[d]. How he executed this commiſſion, in the character of SANCTIFIER, we are now to conſider. SERM. 5.

Under the old Law, God was pleaſed to take upon himſelf the office of KING; he aſſigned the office of PRIEST to Aaron; and that of PROPHET, to Moſes: the Prieſt being the MEDIATOR or Advocate for men to God; and the Prophet the MESSENGER of God to Men. Now the Meſſiah taking all theſe offices, on himſelf; and uniting them in his own perſon, did, in the trueſt and exacteſt ſenſe, *fulfil the Law and the Prophets*. For by *the Law and the Prophets* is meant the whole of the Jewiſh diſpenſation, as delivered by Moſes, and explained and illuſtrated by thoſe holy men, whom God, from time to time, raiſed up to govern and inſtruct his people.

This inſtitution conſiſted of three parts, the POLITICAL, the CEREMONIAL, and the MORAL, under which was contained the SPIRITUAL.

1. The *political* part was a THEOCRACY. The purpoſes of this extraordinary form of government, as they related to the carnal adminiſtration of the Moſaic Oeconomy, I have conſidered elſewhere[e]. But the ſpiritual end was to introduce the dominion of the Son, which was to be extended to all mankind. The *Prophets*,

[d] Matth. ch. v. v. 17. [e] See *Div. Leg.* Book v. Sect. 2.

SERM. 5. the interpreters of the Law, whom, as well as the *Law* itſelf, Jeſus tells us, he was ſent to *fulfil*, inform us at large, how this peculiar regimen was to become an univerſal bleſſing. Firſt by the reſignation of the Theocratic dominion to the Son[f]; and ſecondly, by extending that dominion over the whole race of mankind[g]. Thus the Meſſiah *fulfilled* both what the genius of the *Law*, and the inſpiration of the *Prophets* foretold of him; as it concerned the government political. And in ſo doing he aſſumed the title of KING *of the Jews*.

2. The ſecond diviſion of the Moſaic Law was the *ceremonial:* a ceremonial, which heavily loaded every part of God's worſhip with multifarious and irkſome rites. Now tho' the common condition of humanity declares that this duty, eſpecially the public part of it, can never be decently or properly diſcharged without the aid of ſome exterior ceremonies: yet the minute obſervance of ſo complicated a Ritual tends rather to ſtifle than to invigorate the ſpirit of devotion. We may therefore reaſonably conclude, that theſe things, which have no moral worth or value inherent in them, were not inſtituted on their own account, but for the ſake of ſome occaſional good they were found capable of producing. And of this, we have clear intimations in the writings of the Prophets. They frequently tell us that the *ceremonial Law* was of no uſe or value in itſelf; but that, the thing in which God moſt delighted, was the moral Law of righteouſneſs[h]. If then the Jewiſh Ritual was of ſo ſlight account with

[f] Iſaiah, ix. 6, 7. [g] Ibid. ch. xi. 10.
[h] Amos ch. v. 21, & ſeq. Micah ch. vi. 7, 8.

the

the Inſtitutor himſelf, it may be reaſonably aſked how it came to be ſo minutely delivered and ſo ſcrupulouſly exacted in his ſervice? In this likewiſe the Prophets will inſtruct us. It was impoſed to reſtrain a headſtrong people from Idolatry, to which they were violently and obſtinately carried [i]: and, for that purpoſe, it had a perpetual reference to the then reigning ſuperſtitions. But as this ſecurity from idolatry (conſidering them as a People) was for the ſake of preſerving a ſound and pure foundation for the future diſpenſation, of which, This was only the rudiments, it pleaſed the divine wiſdom that the ceremonial Law ſhould not only be directed againſt thoſe ſuperſtitions, but ſhould likewiſe, be typical of all the great parts of that future diſpenſation: and whoever examines the *ceremonial Law* with the care and attention ſo important a ſtudy requires, will confeſs that both one and the other were equally in the intention of the Lawgiver [k]. SERM. 5.

The ultimate end therefore of theſe rites being to prefigure the death and ſufferings of Chriſt, He may, with a peculiar propriety, be allowed to call himſelf the *fulfiller of the Ceremonial Law, Law*. It being incomplete and deſtitute of its final purpoſe, till Jeſus had performed the whole of that miſſion which the *ceremonial Law*, by prefiguring, had predicted. And when that was once performed, the Types of courſe, were to ceaſe. Now theſe types conſiſting of various kinds of ſacrificial rites, Jeſus by offering up himſelf on the croſs for the ſins of mankind, as was foretold by the Prophets, eminently *fulfilled* the ceremonial Law, in quality of PRIEST.

[i] Jerem. ch. vii. 22, 23. Ezek. ch. xx. 24, 25.

[k] See *Div. Leg.* Book iv. Sect. 6.

3. The

SERM. 5. 3. The laſt and nobleſt branch of the Jewiſh Law was the *Moral:* which inſtructs man in all his relations, whether to his common nature, to God, or his fellow creatures. This tho' delivered pure by Moſes, and according to the truth of things, did yet, like the two other branches (as we have ſeen above) need the maſter-hand of this divine Teacher: who in delivering to mankind a more perfect ſyſtem of moral duty as was predicted of him[l], diſcharged the office of PROPHET, or of *a Meſſenger from God*; as in that of PRIEST he diſcharged the office of *the Meſſenger foretold.*

But under the *moral*, as we have ſaid, was compriſed the *ſpiritual.* And it was this which was more peculiarly the prophetic office: whoſe buſineſs it was not only to give to every part, in this œconomy, its due rank; but to foretel the future fortunes of all; How the Political ſhould be EXTENDED; the Ceremonial, FULFILLED; and the Moral, PURIFIED and exalted.

Thus we ſee, from the nature, end, and condition of this *political*, *ceremonial*, and *moral* œconomy, that Jeſus was the *fulfiller of the Law*; and, from his doing this in the very manner the inſpired men of old predicted, that he was likewiſe the *fulfiller of the Prophets*[m]. Hence he became truly and properly the SANTIFICATION of the *People of God:* and thro' them, of the whole *Church of Chriſt.*

This is that aggregate or corporate holineſs to which the Gentile nations blindly aſpired; and

[l] Iſaiah, ch. xi. 5. Ch. xlii 1, 4.
[m] See *Div. Leg.* Book vi. ſect. 6.

of

of which, the Jewiſh people had gained only the ſhadow. SERM. 5.

But, beſides this GENERAL *Sanctification*; which, as we have ſhewn, is the immediate office of the Son; there was a PARTICULAR, by which each individual was cleanſed and purified; and this was performed thro' the miniſtry of the HOLY SPIRIT, the *Comforter*, whom Jeſus, on his leaving the world, had promiſed to ſend upon the faithful, to remain with them for ever[x]. Who by the effuſion of divine grace ſhed abroad in their hearts, effects that purity of mind, which all other ritual modes of private luſtration tried at in vain, or at beſt, did but typically repreſent.

Now both theſe purifications, the aggregate and particular, make together, that true *Sanctification*, of which Jeſus is ſaid in my text to be the author, and beſtower on mankind.

We have obſerved that *Sanctification* and *Redemption* are addreſſed to the Jews primarily; as *Wiſdom* and *Righteouſneſs* are to the Gentiles. But as the former graces had a ſecondary reference to the Jews, ſo the latter as we ſhall now ſee, have the ſame reference to the Gentiles.

The want of a *Sanctifier* in the Pagan world was ſtill more urgent and deplorable than in the Jewiſh. For the Gentiles having received DEMONS for their tutelary Gods, and devoted themſelves to unclean ſpirits by their national worſhip, the PUBLIC was become, in the ſadeſt ſenſe of the word, PROPHANE. And, by adminiſtring their demonic rites in all the unnatural and exorbitant practiſes of murder and uncleanneſs, PAR-

[x] John xiv. 16. Ch. xvi. 7.

TICULARS

SERM. 5. TICULARS were become in the higheſt degree, IMPURE.

Thus Gentile impiety and pollution being at its height, and the Jewiſh holineſs and purity exterior only, and imperfect, there was a preſſing NECESSITY of *Jeſus*'s being *made unto us, Sanctification.*

2. But this was not the ultimate benefit beſtowed on man, thro' the miniſtry of Jeſus. *Sanctification* was only preparatory to a greater bleſſing: and, like the wedding-garment in the parable, a habit of dignity given to appear in before *the Lord our Redeemer.*

For, in the laſt place, the Apoſtle tells us, *he was made unto us,* REDEMPTION.

Amongſt the many gracious diſpenſations of God to Mankind, the Moſaic hiſtory informs us of one, in which *the depth of the riches both of his Wiſdom and Knowledge* claims our more particular admiration. And that is THE FREE GIFT OF IMMORTALITY to the firſt man; and, thro' him, to his Poſterity, on the eaſy condition, we find, annexed unto it: which Adam having too eaſily violated, he and his whole race returned into a ſtate of mortality and corruption.

From this bondage under death and ſin, God, in his infinite mercy decreed to deliver us. And the condition of a remitted forfeiture being as abſolutely in the breaſt of the Remitter, as the condition on which the bleſſing was originally conferred; he was pleaſed, it ſhould be done by ONE man's willingly offering himſelf to death for an atonement for ALL. That *as by one man's diſobe-*

diſobedience many were made ſinners, ſo by the obedience of one, ſhould many be made righteous [o]. SERM. 5.

How agreeable this ſuccinct account of Man's FALL and RESTORATION is, to what the beſt and moſt received philoſophy teacheth us both of God and Man, ſhall be conſidered at large in a fitter place [p].

This future *Redemption* of the world had been promiſed, even from the time of the *Fall*, to the holy men of old, in terms more or leſs obſcure, as beſt fitted the diſpenſation under which the prediction was delivered. The Choſen People had a more defined image of it in their typical redemption from the ſlavery of Egypt, and their admiſſion to the temporal bleſſings of the land of Canaan. It was ſtill more circumſtantially figured in their public ritual, thro' the miniſtration of expiatory ſacrifices, performed with many ceremonies plainly deſcriptive of the great ſacrifice on the Croſs, for the ſpiritual *Redemption* of mankind.

This people, then, muſt hear with conviction, and, as many of them as were unprejudiced, muſt confeſs with pleaſure, that *Jeſus Chriſt*, by being *made unto us Redemption*, was the true completion of the *Law and the Prophets*.

Nor was this bleſſing of *Redemption* without a ſecondary reference to the ſtate and condition of the Gentiles; whoſe Religion was not merely ineffectual, like the Jewiſh to redeem them from the chains of death and ſin, but ſuch as had brought them under the more diſgraceful bondage of ſubjection to the Devil, thoſe wicked ſpirits, whom

[o] Rom. ch. v. 19. [p] See *Div. Leg.* Book ix.

they

SERM. 5. they worſhiped and adored as their patron Gods.

This was the condition both of Jews and Gentiles, when the Meſſiah came to ſet men free. And here let it be obſerved, in honour of thoſe two Characteriſtic miracles, the *raiſing the dead*, and *the caſting out devils*, that the one elegantly deſigned his office of redeeming the Jews from the *power of the grave*, and the other his office of freeing the Gentiles from the *tyranny of Demons*. The beauty in this diſpoſition of the œconomy was too ſtriking to be paſſed over in ſilence: Otherwiſe, I think, even this moderated uſe, of ſpiritualizing the miracles, ſhould be forborn; as fanciful and precarious. We can conceive no otherwiſe of the miracles of a divine Perſon coming from God, let the peculiar mode of his diſpenſation be what it will, than that they ſhould be objective to the corporal infirmities of men. Now between theſe and their ſpiritual diſorders, there is, by their common qualities of want and diſtreſs, ſo much ſimilitude and ſo natural an analogy, as affords no ground of reaſonable ſuppoſition, that one was a deſigned or prophetic repreſentation of the other.

Thus have I endeavoured to ſhew, which was the main purpoſe of this diſcourſe, *That Jeſus is made unto us, Sanctification and Redemption*, in as true and real a ſenſe as he is our *Wiſdom* and *Righteouſneſs*. Nor is this a matter of ſmall moment. The teaching *Wiſdom and Righteouſneſs* made his miſſion EXPEDIENT: but the beſtowing *Sanctification and Redemption* made it NECESSARY.

To

To inſtruct the world in the knowledge of one God, and in the practice of moral virtue, was, without doubt, putting us into the road of the divine favour; and making out attainment of the ſupreme good more eaſy and expeditious. But God, whoſe *mercies are over all his works*, and who, in this very revelation, hath informed us, that from thoſe to whom little is given, much will not be required [a], would have received his miſerable creatures to his mercy, in what condition ſoever he had ſuffered them to remain, if ſo be they had taken care to make the beſt uſe of the little was afforded them. SERM. 5.

But *Sanctification and Redemption* do more than ſhew us into the road of God's favour: They reſtore us to the free privilege of LIFE AND IMMORTALITY: which man having forfeited, by a breach of the condition on which it was beſtowed, had no pretence to reclaim; ſo that whenever it was reſtored, it might be given on ſuch conditions as the all-gracious Donor ſhould think fit to impoſe. It is reſtored: and the conditions are FAITH in, and OBEDIENCE to, a crucified SAVIOUR; who, by this ſacrifice of himſelf, became the *Sanctification and Redemption* of mankind. The conſequence is, that theſe are not only uſeful and *expedient* for procuring God's favour, but abſolutely *neceſſary* for our recovery of life and immortality.

This is placing CHRISTIANITY on its proper baſis, a foundation of real ſtrength and ſolidity.

[a] Luke xii. 48.

But

SERM. 5.

But when the preſumption of men tempts them to disjoin what God hath put together, not only the benefits of that union are loſt, but other various, and unthought of evils ariſe, which ſubject the religious œconomy, thus abuſed, to every kind of injury; diſhonouring the Author of our Faith; and expoſing the Chriſtian profeſſion to perpetual inſults.

This was never more unhappily verified than in the caſe before us.

1. For he who conſiders Jeſus only in the light of a Republiſher of the Law of nature, can hardly entertain a higher opinion of the Saviour of the world than ſome have done of SOCRATES; whom Eraſmus eſteemed an object of devotion; and many a good Proteſtant have thought to be divinely inſpired. For was not Socrates, by his preaching moral virtue, and by his dying to bear witneſs to the unity of God, *made*, to the Grecian people, and, by means of their extended commerce of politeneſs, to the reſt of mankind, *Wiſdom and Righteouſneſs?* And what more did Jeſus? for, according to the principles of this paganized Chriſtianity, his titles of MESSIAH and REDEEMER are reduced to mere figurative and accommodated terms. But theſe bold extremes men ran into thro' their ignorance of the nature of thoſe prophecies which foretel his advent; and the abſurdity of thoſe ſyſtems, which pretend to explain his office.

2. As this Theology degrades Jeſus to the low condition of a Grecian Sophiſt; ſo it renders his Religion obnoxious to the inſults of every daring Impoſtor.

He

He was ſent, ſay theſe new Doctors of the Church, to teach mankind the worſhip of the true God, and the practice of moral righteouſneſs [b]. SERM. 5.

"This will be readily allowed, replies an underſtanding MAHOMETAN [c]: And on this very principle, WE hold, that when Jeſus had done his office; and mankind had again relapſed, into *antichriſtian* Idolatry and Polytheiſm, as before into *Pagan*, God ſent OUR PROPHET who worked the like ſudden and ſenſible reformation in the NORTH-EAST, as your prophet did in the NORTH-WEST.

What reply now will our rational Divine make to this apology for ISMAELISM?

All he hath to ſay is, That Jeſus and his Apoſtles have every where intimated, that his Goſ-

[b] A celebrated Frenchman, who writes on all ſubjects indifferently, and perhaps knew better what he was about than theſe Divines, goes ſtill further, and affirms That Chriſtianity is not only no more than the Religion of nature perfected, but that *it could not poſſibly* be any more.—"Notre Religion revélée "n'eſt même, et *ne pouvoit être*, que cette Loi naturelle per-"fectionnée." *Diſcours ſur le Theiſme*, par M. de Voltaire.

[c] The Alcoran teaches that Jeſus did not ſuffer on the croſs. Yet Mahomet denied our Saviour's Divinity. Why then ſuch averſion to the *paſſion?* Evidently for this reaſon, the doctrine of REDEMPTION followed; and that compleated the ſcheme of *revelation*, and (as we ſhall ſee) ſhut out the Impoſtor's pretences. M. Otter, a very intelligent traveller, of the Academy Royal of Inſcriptions, tells us of a conference he had with a learned Perſian. The Mahometan ſaid, they reverenced all our ſacred writings except St. Paul's. — *qu'ils reſpectent tous, excepté Saint Paul.* [Voiage en Turquie et en Perſe, vol. 1. p. 22.] Why was this *exception?* On the ſame principle: becauſe St. Paul is full of the doctrine of REDEMPTION; explains the Chriſtian ſyſtem by it; and makes the whole Faith depend upon it.

SERM. 5. pel is the laſt of God's diſpenſations; on the terms of which our final doom is irrevocably to be decided: ſo that all future pretenders to the like office and character muſt needs be eſteemed Impoſtors."

But here a DEIST would come in, and take advantage of our diſtreſs; for it is to be obſerved alike of all theſe ſhifting defences of fanciful, and unſcriptural ſyſtems, that they only ſupply new arms to the various adverſaries of our faith: A Deiſt, I ſay, would be ready to reply, "That it is indeed true that Jeſus hath declared his own Miſſion to be the LAST: but that this is the artful expedient of every pretended Meſſenger from Heaven, in order to perpetuate his own ſcheme, and to obviate the danger of an antiquated authority. The Impoſtor, Mahomet himſelf hath done the ſame: He, who here obtrudes his armed pretenſions upon us, hath ſecured the duration of his ſenſual Religion by the very ſame contrivance: A thing, in his ideas, ſo much of courſe, that he did not even object to Jeſus's uſe of it, who had employed it before him; and for no other purpoſe than to cut off his, and all following pretenſions to the like character. On the contrary, he avowed and maintained the general truth of the Nazarite's commiſſion. Now (purſues the Deiſt) a method employed by a confeſſed impoſtor is taken up with an ill grace by the defender of true religion. But I draw a further conſequence, ſays he, againſt the Goſpel, from this repreſentation of Chriſtianity. For if the preaching moral truth and righteouſneſs were the whole of Jeſus's character and office, then his miſſion did not

not anſwer its purpoſe, the laſting reformation of mankind, in the knowledge of God, and in the practice of virtue: ſince the world ſoon fell back again into the ſtate from which Jeſus had delivered it; as appears from the hiſtory of the times in which Mahomet appeared, and the advantages he made of that degeneracy." SERM. 5.

Thus ſubjected to the inſults and injuries of every kind of impoſtors, who ſet upon deluding the credulous, either by inventing NEW revelations or by decrying the OLD, do theſe REPUBLISHERS expoſe the holy faith of Jeſus: That faith which, we are told, was *founded on a rock*, impregnable to the aſſaults of men and demons; to the ſophiſms of infidelity, and the preſtiges of impoſture! And ſo, indeed, it is, if we will take it as we find it, if we will receive it as it came from above, if we will preſerve it pure and entire as it was delivered to the ſaints, THE REDEMPTION OF THE WORLD BY THE SON OF GOD, IN THE VOLUNTARY SACRIFICE OF HIMSELF UPON THE CROSS.

This [a] ſecures the character of Jeſus from the inſults of falſe pretenders; and his Goſpel from the injuries of falſe reaſoners.

For, firſt of all, if Jeſus did, indeed, *redeem* mankind, and reſtore them to their loſt inheritance; the ſcheme and progreſs of revelation is compleated: which beginning at the LAPSE, naturally and neceſſarily ends in the reſtoration and recovery of LIFE AND IMMORTALITY by the death and paſſion of our Lord. CHRISTIA-

[a] See *Div. Leg.* Book ix. where the conformity of this Doctrine to right reaſon and the nature of things is evinced at large.

SERM. 5. NITY conſidered in this view (and in this view only, Scripture gives it us to conſider) ſoon detects all the artful pretences of impoſture; and ſecures its own honour by virtue of its very eſſence: the great ſcene of providence being now cloſed, in a full completion of its one, regular, entire, and eternal purpoſe.

Secondly, if Jeſus indeed *redeemed* mankind, then did he neither preach nor dye in vain: it not being in man's power, with all his malice and perverſeneſs, to defeat or make void the great purpoſe of his coming. For tho' one part of his miſſion was to inſtruct the world in *Wiſdom* and *Righteouſneſs*, which it was in man's power to forget and neglect; yet what is chiefly eſſential in his character, and peculiar in his office, the *Sanctification* and *Redemption* of the world, man could not fruſtrate nor render ineffectual: For it is not in his power to make that to be undone which is once done and perfected.

The faſtidious Caviller therefore hath employed his pains to very little purpoſe in attempting to diſcredit Revelation from this topic. His laboured diſcourſes on the moral ſtate of the world, before and ſince the coming of Chriſt, are quite beſide the queſtion. For, tho', where the compariſon is fully and impartially ſtated, I will venture to ſay, the advantage will be found to lye on the ſide of our Religion; yet ſuppoſing, the truths preached by Jeſus, and the aſſiſtance given by the holy Spirit, had not much improved the general morals of mankind; How does this tend to the diſcredit of the Goſpel; unleſs the Goſpel can be proved to have no natural tendency to make men

men better; But this is ſo deſperate an undertak- SERM.
ing, that, I believe, infidelity will hardly be per- 5.
ſuaded to engage in it. Indeed the contrary is ſo true, that, as I have ſhewn elſewhere, when you lay together the ſtate of PAGAN and CHRISTIAN virtue, one manifeſt and eſſential difference is found between them; which is this, that in the gentile world men often acted wrong UPON PRINCIPLE; in the Chriſtian, always AGAINST PRINCIPLE [c]. Now, not to inſiſt upon the neceſſary reſtraint this muſt be upon vice; it plainly demonſtrates the NATURAL TENDENCY of the Goſpel-truths to make men virtuous: and to inforce them with a ſtronger impulſe did not ſuit the genius of a rational religion, whoſe object was free agency.

But the proper anſwer to this idle cavil is taken, as we ſay, from the topic before us. Inſtruction of the world in *Wiſdom* and *Righteouſneſs* was but the ſecondary end of Chriſt's miſſion: The firſt and primary, was to become its *ſanctification* and *redemption*; the one muſt needs be common to every revelation coming from God; the other is peculiar to the chriſtian: And this, as we have ſhewn, cannot poſſibly be fruſtrated, or rendered ineffectual.

To conclude from all that hath been ſaid, As we ſhould not affect to pry into the nature of thoſe things which God hath been pleaſed to withhold from our ſearch, and to cover with the ſacred veil of myſtery; ſo neither ſhould we reject a truth, expreſly delivered, becauſe we may not fully comprehend all the reaſons on which it ſtands.

[c] *Div. Leg.* B. iv. § 2.

SERM. 5. In a word, as we ſhould not venture to go on where the ſilence of Scripture bids us ſtop; ſo neither ſhould we preſume to ſtop where, with ſo loud a voice, it commands us to go on.

Men have been made ſufficiently ſenſible of the miſchiefs attending the firſt of theſe indiſcretions, the being *wiſe* ABOVE *what is written*: I have here endeavoured to ſhew, that the other, the being *wiſe* AGAINST *what is written*, is not attended with fewer inconveniences. What then remains but to chuſe the middle way, the way to become *wiſe unto ſalvation*; and, neither, in practice or ſpeculation, to ADD to, nor to DIMINISH from, the WORD OF GOD?

Let us therefore religiouſly adhere to the doctrine of my text in its juſt extent, That *Jeſus Chriſt, of God, is made unto us* WISDOM *and* RIGHTEOUSNESS, *and* SANCTIFICATION *and* REDEMPTION.

SERMON VI[a].

The Office and Operations of the HOLY SPIRIT.

JOHN, ch. xiv. v. 16, *etc.*

And I will pray the Father, and he ſhall give you another COMFORTER, *that he may abide with you for ever; even the* SPIRIT OF TRUTH.—*He dwelleth with you, and ſhall be in you — which is the* HOLY GHOST, *whom the Father will ſend in* MY NAME. *He ſhall* TEACH YOU ALL THINGS.

IN the foregoing diſcourſe, where I ſpoke of that part of the character and office of JESUS which concerns the SANCTIFICATION of mankind, I obſerved, that this *Sanctification* was of two ſorts, the aggregate, and particular: that he performed the firſt in his own perſon; the ſecond, mediately, thro' the operation of the HOLY SPIRIT. And this I now propoſe to conſider more at large. SERM. 6.

[a] The Reader will hardly need to be told that this diſcourſe (as the preceding) is the ſubſtance of ſeveral ſermons.

SERM. 6. The bleſſed JESUS came into the world, ON THE PART OF GOD, to declare the good will of our heavenly Father to the forfeited poſterity of Adam. He teſtified the truth of his miſſion by amazing miracles; and ſealed the redemption of mankind by the more amazing devotion of himſelf to an ignominious death.

But as the REDEMPTION, ſo generally procured, could only operate on particulars, under certain circumſtances of FAITH and OBEDIENCE very repugnant to our corrupted nature, the bleſſed Jeſus, on his leaving the world, promiſed his followers his interceſſion with the Father, to ſend another divine perſon ON THE PART OF MAN, namely the HOLY GHOST, called the *Spirit of truth* and the *Comforter*, who, agreeably to the import of thoſe names, ſhould cooperate with us in eſtabliſhing Faith, and in perfecting obedience; or, in other words, ſhould *ſanctify us to redemption.*

This is a ſuccinct account of the œconomy of Grace: entirely conſonant to our beſt conceptions of the nature of God and of the condition of man. For if man was to be reinſtated in a free gift, juſtly forfeited, we cannot but ſuppoſe that as, on the one hand, it might be reſtored on what conditions beſt pleaſed the giver; ſo on the other, God would graciouſly provide that it ſhould not be beſtowed in vain.

An atonement, therefore, was to be made for the offended majeſty of the *Father*; and this was the work of the *Son*: and a remedy was to be provided for the miſerable condition of man, which hindered the atonement from producing its effects,

effects, and this was the office of the *Holy Ghoſt*: So that both were joint workers in the great buſineſs of reconciling God to man. SERM. 6.

The preceding diſcourſe hath explained the character and office of the *Son*; we are now to conſider the office and operations of the *Holy Ghoſt*.

His office in general, as my text points out to us, is to ENLIGHTEN THE UNDERSTANDING, and to RECTIFY THE WILL.

We have ſeen, in the preceding diſcourſe, the preſſing need of his deſcent, from the total corruption, both in principle and practice, which had at that time overſpread the world; when, as the apoſtle of the Gentiles obſerves, "They "changed the glory of God to an image made "like to man, to birds and four-footed beaſts "and creeping things—they were filled with all "unrighteouſneſs, fornication, wickedneſs, co-"vetouſneſs, maliciouſneſs; full of envy, mur-"der, debate, deceit, malignity,—deſpightful, "proud, boaſters, inventors of evil things, diſ-"obedient to parents, covenant-breakers, with-"out natural affection, implacable, unmerciful[f]." Under this horrid picture, humanity diſappears: and we ſee, that nothing but the omnipotency of the Holy Spirit could be able to diſperſe the contagion of that poiſon, which Hell had now, for many ages, been breathing out upon the world.

The Holy Ghoſt (ſays Jeſus) *whom the Father will ſend in my name, he ſhall teach you all things.* That is, *all* which concern FAITH and OBEDIENCE. Theſe two branches of his office, in

[f] Rom. ch. v.

the

SERM. 6. the first of which he is called the *Spirit of truth*: in the other, the *Comforter*, I shall consider in their order.

1.

Let us see then the method divine wisdom was pleased to employ in manifesting the operation of the Holy Ghost, as the *Spirit and guide of truth* [z].

The first extraordinary attestation of his descent was in the GIFT OF TONGUES at the day of Pentecost.

Besides the great, and almost indispensable use of this endowment to the first ministers of the Gospel, who were to carry the glad tidings of it throughout the world; the elegance and propriety, in the choice of this miracle to attest the real descent of that Spirit who was to *teach us all things*, can never be enough admired: for words being the human vehicle of knowledge, this gift was the fittest precursor of the *Spirit of truth*.

This propriety perhaps was not the least inducement to a late eminent writer to hazard an opinion, (as it certainly gives his opinion some degree of plausibility) "that the gift of tongues "upon the day of Pentecost was not lasting, but "instantaneous and transitory; not bestowed upon them for the constant work of the ministry, "but as an occasional sign only, that the person "endowed with it was a chosen minister of the "Gospel: which sign, as soon as it had served

[z] John ch. xvi. v. 13.

"that

" that particular purpoſe, ſeems, he ſays, to " have ceaſed, and totally to have vaniſhed [h]." SERM. 6.

I ſhall therefore beg leave to examine the grounds of this new interpretation, ſo apparently derogatory to the operation of the Holy Spirit.

The celebrated perſon begins in order; and firſt attacks the type, or viſible ſign of the gift, the FIERY TONGUES. For having declared the gift itſelf occaſional and temporary, he has very conſiſtently endeavoured to ſhew, that the ſign of it was momentary. He ſuppoſes it to be no more than a ſudden flaſh of lightning, " which, " like all other phænomena of that ſort, no " ſooner apppeared than vaniſhed [i]."

His reaſon for this opinion is, " becauſe when " the diſciples ſpoke in ſtrange tongues to the " multitude, the concluſion they drew from that " circumſtance ſeems to ſhew, that the celeſtial " fire did not, at that time, ſit upon their " heads [k]."

But the learned writer did not reflect, that when the *cloven tongues appeared upon each of them*, they were aſſembled together in a private room, ſequeſtred, and apart: and that it was not till the thing was *noiſed abroad*, and the *multitude come together* to enquire into the truth of it, that the apoſtles *ſpoke with tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance*. Now between this viſible deſcent of the Holy Spirit, and their ſpeaking to the multitude, a conſiderable time muſt have intervened;

[h] Dr. Middleton's *Eſſay on the gift of tongues*, vol. ii. of his Works, p. 79.

[i] P. 81. [k] P. 82.

ſufficient

SERM. 6. ſufficient for the ſteddy duration of the appearance, to convince every one, that it was not natural but miraculous. And this, the original words well expreſs[1]: nor has the tranſlator rendered

[1] — ἐκάθισέ τε ἐφ' ἕνα ἕκαστον αὐτῶν. ——— And in other places of Scripture, where the like deſcent of the Holy Spirit, in viſible form, is mentioned, it is deſcribed in ſuch terms as denote a very different appearance from a ſudden flaſh of lightning. So Matt. iii. 16. tells us, that *the Spirit of God deſcended like a dove, and lighted upon Jeſus*, ὡσεὶ περιστερὰν; that is, with a dove-like motion: as birds, when about to ſettle upon any thing, hover over it, and quiver their wings. Thus, in the place in queſtion, the ſame ſpirit is ſaid to deſcend under the appearance of *cloven tongues, like as of fire*; ὡσεὶ πυρὸς. In the former inſtance, only the *motion* of the deſcent is deſcribed: in this, both the *motion, figure*, and *colour*. Yet the thing ſeen was no more a *fire* on the heads of the Apoſtles, than it was a *dove* on the head of Jeſus. And the circumſtance of the *cloven tongues*, which the ſacred hiſtorian employs to deſcribe the *motion*, and which the learned perſon takes up to prove his hypotheſis of a momentary exiſtence of the phænomenon, proves it, indeed, to be of ſome continuance. "We cannot (ſays he) think it ſtrange "that fire flaſhing from heaven, and ſuddenly vaniſhing, "ſhould yield ſome reſemblance of *tongues* to the eyes of the "MULTITUDE; for this is no more than what is natural, "and what we may obſerve, in ſome meaſure, from every "flame that flaſhes from the clouds, and breaks itſelf, of "courſe, in a number of ſmall pointed particles not remote "from that ſhape." p. 82. Here, let us firſt obſerve, that an elementary fire is no more meant by ὡσεὶ πυρὸς, than by a real dove by ὡσεὶ περιστερὰν. For as only a *dove-live motion* is intimated in this latter expreſſion, ſo a *flame-like motion* is intimated in the other: and what this was, the hiſtorian tells us, in its effect, the *appearance of cloven tongues*. Now it is certain the learned perſon is miſtaken in ſuppoſing, that a *ſudden flaſh of lightning* has the appearance of cloven tongues. For ſuch a phænomenon exhibits to the eye of the beholder only a line of light, angularly broken into ſeveral directions, very different from the form of *tongues*, whether whole or *cloven*. Whenever a flame aſſumes this appearance it is become

dered them amiſs, in the phraſe of SITTINGS *upon each of them*: words ſo oppoſed to a momentary appearance, that it would be trifling with common ſenſe to deduce ſuch an interpretation from oblique circumſtances and collateral reaſoning. It is true, the learned writer concludes, even from the ſign's being only a ſudden flaſh, which vaniſhed as ſoon as it appeared, that "it indicated ſomething miraculous and ſupernatural [m]." But I am afraid, that thoſe who are the readieſt to embrace his phyſiology, will not be the firſt to admit his theological inference eſpecially as it is ſo gratuitouſly conceded to us. SERM. 6.

The learned perſon then proceeds to the gift itſelf. He attempts to ſhew, that "the chief or "SOLE END RATHER of the gift of tongues "was to ſerve as a ſenſible ſign in that infirm "ſtate of the firſt Chriſtians, that thoſe to whom "it was vouchſafed were under a divine influence, and acted by a divine commiſſion—ſo that "it is not reaſonable to think that this diverſity "of tongues was given to the apoſtles for the ſake "of converting thoſe people before whom they "then ſpoke [n]." "Hence, he ſays, it appears "that the gift was not of a ſtable or permanent "nature [o]," was no laſting endowment to enable the apoſtles to perform their miniſtry amongſt thoſe whoſe language they had never learnt; but a momentary power, which ſerved that day for

come *ſtationary*; and then, its natural motion raiſing it upwards, and the adjoining parts dividing from one another, it repreſents a pyramidal, or *tongue*-like figure, *cloven*. A demonſtration, that the appearance in queſtion was not *momentary*, but of ſome continuance.

[m] P. 82. [n] P. 87. [o] P. 89.

a ſign

SERM. 6. a ſign to the multitude: and conſequently, they had theſe languages to learn anew when they wanted the uſe of them. This, I ſay, appears to be his inference from the arguments brought to ſupport his principle. At the ſame time, it muſt be obſerved, he hath laid down the propoſition ſo looſely and ambiguouſly, that, when conſidered alone, it may either mean, That the power of ſpeaking ſtrange tongues was only infuſed occaſionally, like the power of working miracles; or elſe, That the knowledge of the language, when infuſed, was not laſting; the inſpired linguiſt preſently falling back into his natural ſtate of idiotiſm.

In the firſt ſenſe, the aſſertion ſeems to be well founded. And from its ſobriety, and more eſpecially from the extravagance of the other meaning, which leaves but little diſtinction between the power of ſpeaking with tongues on the day of Pentecoſt, and the extatic ravings of modern fanatics, one would be naturally diſpoſed to think it was the ſenſe in which the learned perſon would chuſe to be underſtood.

But then, all the arguments employed by him for the ſupport of his propoſition, as we ſhall now ſee, confine us to the ſecond ſenſe. Which therefore, of neceſſity, muſt be his meaning.

Let us ſee then how he ſupports this opinion.

1. His firſt argument is the authority of ſome modern critics[a]. But I may be excuſed, if I ſuffer theſe to have no more weight with me when they contradict a received interpretation, than they uſually have with him when they confirm it.

[a] P. 89.

2. His

2. His ſecond argument is inferred from Scripture itſelf. "It appears, he thinks, from the ſtories of Cornelius's family, and the Diſciples at Epheſus (both of whom ſpoke with tongues on the Holy Ghoſt's deſcending on them, while Peter preached and Paul baptiſed) that the gift was not laſting but inſtantaneous; and given only for a ſign of their real admiſſion into the church of Chriſt." For, as he truly obſerves, "here "was no room to ſuppoſe another uſe, the ſe- "veral aſſemblies being all of the ſame ſpeech "and language[a]."

SERM. 6.

But ſurely, this reaſon ſhews, the inſtances come not up to the point. Becauſe the learned perſon ſees no other uſe here than for a ſign, he concludes the gift to be momentary. Should he not therefore ſuffer us, where we do ſee another uſe, as in the gift at Pentecoſt, to conclude that it was there as laſting as the uſe to which it ſerved: And ſhould we not both conclude, that the ſame endowment which in one caſe was tranſitory, in another might be durable. The converts of the family of Cornelius, and the diſciples at Epheſus, were in a private ſtation in the church: ſo that an inſtantaneous exerciſe of the power fully anſwered its end: It was a mark that theſe converts were really become members of Chriſt's myſtic body as well by the baptiſm of the ſpirit, as of water. But the caſe was different in reſpect to the Apoſtles: They were the appointed preachers of the word to remote and barbarous nations: an office not to be diſcharged without a competent knowledge of the various languages

[a] P. 85——6.

of

SERM. 6. of the earth. We find them, on the day of Pentecoſt, miraculouſly endowed with this knowledge. What are we to think, but that the PRINCIPAL end of the gift was to qualify them for their miſſion?

3. The learned writer's third argument in ſupport of the contrary opinion is to this purpoſe.—He ſuppoſes, that if we allow the gift to be laſting, we muſt conclude, that ſome, at leaſt, of the books of Scripture were in this inſpired Greek. But (ſays he) "We ſhould naturally "expect to find an inſpired language, to be ſuch "as is worthy of God; that is, pure, clear, "noble, and affecting, even beyond the force "of common ſpeech; ſince nothing can come "from God but what is perfect in its kind. In "ſhort, the purity of Plato, and the eloquence "of Cicero. Now (he ſays) if we try the A-"poſtolic language by this rule, we ſhall be ſo "far from aſcribing it to God, that we ſhall "ſcarce think it worthy of man; that is, of the "liberal and polite; it being utterly rude and "barbarous, and abounding with every fault "that can poſſibly deform a language. And "tho' ſome writers, prompted by a falſe zeal, "have attempted to defend the *purity of Scrip-*"*ture Greek*, their labour has been idly em-"ployed [a]."

I think

[a] P. 91. The learned writer then draws a parallel from the caſe of the DELPHIC ORACLES. With what deſign, will be beſt ſeen by his own repreſentation of it. He ſays, that "theſe Oracles were delivered in verſe, but ſuch bad ones, that *men of ſenſe* eaſily ſaw *they could not be inſpired by the deity*. Others, on the contrary, held them to be very good. The diſpute was at laſt compromiſed, by allowing *ſome ſort of inſpira-*

I think, indeed, that *their labour has been idly employed* [a]. But then let me obſerve, That the ſame falſe principle, which miſled them into one extreme, SERM. 6.

inſpiration, but leaving much *to the proper talents and faculties of the Propheteſs*. However this, and their degenerating into proſe, brought on an univerſal contempt, which ended in their expiration." This is, in truth, a ſad ſtory; and may, I ſuppoſe, be taken for a warning. Howevef let us remember, that the *Delphic Oracles* were ſuppoſed to come from the *God of verſe*, and therefore it was not unreaſonable to expect they ſhould be excellent. On the ſame account, and eſpecially as the Propheteſs was confeſſed to be but a *mere organ*, it was prevaricating, to talk of *ſome ſort of inſpiration and of much left to the proper talents of the Propheteſs*. Laſtly, the diſgrace of this oracle was owing neither to its bad verſe, nor its ignominious proſe, but to very different cauſes.——The conſequence of all is, that, from this famous caſe, no one can have any pretence to expect a model of perfect eloquence in the New Teſtament; nor any cauſe to be aſhamed of holding *ſome ſort of inſpiration, and leaving much to the proper talents and faculties of the ſacred writers*: becauſe *the ſpirits of the prophets are* ſaid to be *ſubject to the Prophets*, and conſequently they were *not mere organs*. Nor, laſtly, any reaſon to be apprehenſive, that the barbarity of the Scripture Greek will ever bring it into diſcredit with thoſe MEN OF SENSE.

[a] The Mahometan Doctors, who (like their maſter) were under the ſame deluſion, have been more ſucceſsful in perſuading the world that the Alcoran is a model of perfect eloquence. But then they had advantages which theſe Chriſtian Doctors have not. For firſt, Mahomet himſelf delivered it to his followers under this character; and defied all the power of human rhetoric to equal it: whereas the ſacred writers diſclaim all ſuch imaginary advantages. Secondly, when Mahomet wrote the Alcoran, there was no acknowledged model of Arabic eloquence, as there was of the Grecian, when the books of Scripture were written; ſo thoſe bold pretences eaſily obtained; and ſmoothed the way for its becoming ſuch a model. Laſtly, Enthuſiaſm, which had done much greater things, eaſily brought the Arabs to believe, that they ſaw

SERM. 6. extreme, hath betrayed this learned perſon into another.

They both ſeem to have taken it for granted, that what is called the purity, elegance, and ſublime of language, is ſomething natural and eſſential to human ſpeech, and inherent in the conſtitution of things: and that there is ſome certain ARCHETYPE in nature, to which thoſe qualities refer, and on which, they are to be formed and modeled [b]. And, indeed, admitting this to be the

what their Leader ſo confidently affirmed, an all perfect model of eloquence in the chapters of the Alcoran. And they believed ſo long, till it became, in fact, what they at firſt only fancied it to be; as real and ſubſtantial a model of eloquence as any other. But here, in the North-weſt, our enthuſiaſm, is neither ſo exalted, nor our temper ſo conſtant. We have neither the knack of perſuading ourſelves ſo eaſily, nor the humour of ſticking to a faſhion ſo obſtinately.

[b] This ſeems, too, to have been the opinion of the noble author of the *Characteriſtics*; who illuſtrates the argument in his lively manner:—"It is NO OTHERWISE in the gram-"matical art of characters and *painted ſpeech* than in the art "of *painting* itſelf. I have ſeen, in certain Chriſtian churches, "an ancient piece or two, affirmed, on the ſolemn faith of "prieſtly tradition, *to have been angelically and divinely* "*wrought by a ſupernatural hand and ſacred pencil.* Had "the piece happened to be of a hand like Raphael's, I could "have found nothing certain to oppoſe to the tradition: But "having obſerved the whole *ſtyle* and manner of the pre-"tended heavenly workmanſhip to be ſo indifferent as to "vary, in many particulars, from *the truth of art*, I pre-"ſumed, within myſelf, to beg pardon of the tradition, and "aſſert confidently, *That if the pencil had been heaven-guided* "*it could never have been ſo lame in its performance:* it be-"ing a mere contradiction to all divine and moral truth, "that a *celeſtial hand*, ſubmitting itſelf to the rudiments of a "*human art*, ſhould ſin againſt the art itſelf, and expreſs "falſhood and error inſtead of juſtneſs and proportion." p. 230. Vol. iii.

Theſe

the caſe, one ſhould be apt enough to conclude, that when the Author of nature condeſcended to inſpire one of theſe plaſtick performances of human art, he would take care to make it the exacteſt pattern of the archetype. But the matter is far

SERM. 6.

Theſe remarks (like the learned perſon's ſtory of the DELPHIC ORACLES *) need no application. Every one ſees they are made in diſcredit of the inſpiration of ſacred Scripture; and their force depends on the truth of the propoſition, with which he ſets out. *That it is no otherwiſe in the grammatical art of characters and painted ſpeech than in the art of painting itſelf.* That is, *the painted ſpeech* of ideas, and the painted images of things, are of the ſame kind. On the contrary, I hold them to be of very different kinds; having nothing in common but the office of repreſenting the images of nature, or of the author's mind, *truly* and *clearly*. And what thing is there, that does not hold ſomething in common with another? The difference between Theſe is indeed no leſs than between things NATURAL and POSITIVE, conſtitutional and arbitrary: *Painting* being IMITATION, and *words*, only SYMBOLS: The firſt, conſtant, unvariable, neceſſary, as having its archetype in nature: the other, unſtable, ſhifting, and capricious, as depending for its exiſtence on the human will, under direction of the fancy.——What are the conſequences?——In PAINTING there is properly but *one true ſtyle*, which is the exact repreſentation of nature. In SPEECH there are as many as are the tempers and humours, the cuſtoms and faſhions of men: Eloquence, or true ſtyle, being nothing elſe but adapting human ſpeech to the various conceptions, fancies, and affections of the hearers: So that, in painting, there is but one true ſtyle, and that REAL; becauſe an imitation of nature. In ſpeech there are many true ſtyles but all FANTASTIC; becauſe all are the creatures of arbitrary faſhion.

What then are we to conclude, concerning HEAVENLY WORKMANSHIP in *painting* and in *ſpeech*? Even this, That if an inſpired painter were to give us a picture, it would indeed equal or excel the pencil of Raphael; becauſe here the Inſpirer had a *real* archetype to work by, and that an *heaven-*

* P. 91. of the *Eſſay on the gift of tongues.*

SERM. 6. far otherwiſe. Theſe qualities are accidental and ARBITRARY; and depend on cuſtom and faſhion: modes of humanity as various as the differing climes of the earth; and as inconſtant as the tempers, genius, and circumſtances of its inhabitants. For what is *purity*, but the uſe of ſuch terms and their combinations, as the caprice of a writer or ſpeaker of anthority hath preferred to its equals? What is *elegance*, but ſuch a turn of idiom as a faſhionable fancy hath brought into credit? and what is *ſublimity*, but the application of ſuch images as arbitrary and caſual connections, rather than their own native grandeur, have dignified and enobled? The conſequence of this will be, that that mode of compoſition which is a model of perfection to one nation or people, muſt appear extravagant or mean to another. And ſo, in fact, it was. Aſiatic and Indian eloquence were eſteemed hyperbolic and unnatural to the Greeks and Romans: and the Greek and Roman eloquence, in its turn, cold and inſipid to the warm inhabitants of the Eaſt.

Now the New Teſtament was deſigned for the rule and direction of all mankind. But, ſuch a rule required inſpiration: and inſpiration, the objectors ſay, implies the moſt perfect eloquence.

ly, namely NATURE. But, if we may credit what reaſon ſeems to tell us, an inſpired writer would receive no more aſſiſtance, in expreſſion, from the Holy Spirit, than what was neceſſary to give his ſpeech the eſſential qualities of all language, namely, CLEARNESS and PRECISION; becauſe here was no *real archetype* to follow, the various modes of Rhetoric being moſtly fantaſtic, and having no exiſtence but in capricious cuſtom; and therefore unworthy the notice of a divine Inſpirer.

What

What human model then was the Holy Ghoſt to follow? for a human model it muſt needs be, becauſe there was no other; and if there were, no other would anſwer the purpoſe; which was to make a due impreſſion on the mind and affections. Should the eaſtern eloquence be employed? but this would be too ſwelling and animated for the Weſt. Should the weſtern? but this would be too ſtill and inactive for the Eaſt. Or ſuppoſe us only ſolicitous for what we beſt underſtand. Which ſpecies of this latter genus ſhould the ſacred writers have preferred? The diſſolute ſoftneſs of the Aſiatic Greeks, or the dry conciſeneſs of the Spartans? the flowing exuberance of Attic eloquence, or the grave ſeverity of the Roman? Or ſhould it have been that African torrent, which aroſe from the fermented mixture of the other two, and ſoon after overflowed the church with theological conceits, in a ſparkling luxuriancy of thought and ſombrous rankneſs of expreſſion? Various Specieſes! all as much diſliked, and each as much decried by its oppoſite, as the two genus's by one another. But it will be ſaid, Are there not ſome general principles of eloquence in common to all? There are. Why then ſhould not theſe have been employed to credit the Apoſtolic inſpiration? Becauſe the end, even of theſe, is to miſlead reaſon and inflame the paſſions: which being moſt abhorrent to the truth and purity of our holy religion, were very fitly rejected by the inſpired pen-men. Beſides, the Maſters of Rhetoric confeſs, that the utmoſt perfection of their Art conſiſts in keeping it concealed; for that the oſtentation or ſhew of art

SERM. 6.

SERM. 6. ſeems to indicate the abſence of truth [a]. Hence ſo many various precepts to make their moſt artificial periods appear artleſs. Now was that a proper inſtrument for heavenly-directed men, which derives all its credit from its pretended abſence, and ſtudied keeping out of ſight?

What therefore does common ſenſe tell us ſhould be obſerved, in the ſtyle of an univerſal Law? certainly no more than this ſimple rule, To retain what is common to all language, and to neglect what is peculiar to each. Now what is this, but CLEARNESS and PRECISION? by which the mind and ſentiments of the writer are intelligibly conveyed to the reader. This quality is eſſential, invariably the ſame, and independent of cuſtom and faſhion. To give a formed Language this quality is the office of Syntaxis, or the combination of the ſeveral parts of ſpeech, into a ſyſtematic congruity; the very thing in language which is leaſt poſitive, as being formed on the principles of philoſophy and logic: whereas, all beſides, from the very power of the elements, and ſignification of the terms, to the tropes and figures in compoſition, are arbitrary; and, as deviating from thoſe principles, frequently vicious [b].

[a] —ubicunque ars oſtentatur, veritas abeſſe videatur. *Quint.* l. ix. c. 3.

[b] Quintilian, ſpeaking of that ornamented ſpeech which he calls σχήματα λέξεως. ſays,——eſſet enim omne ſchema VITIUM, ſi non peteretur, ſed accideret. Verum auctoritate, vetuſtate, conſuetudine plerumque defenditur, ſæpe etiam RATIONE QUADAM. Ideoque cum ſit a ſimplici rectoque loquendi genere deflexa, virtus eſt, ſi habet PROBABILE ALIQUID quod ſequatur. L. ix. c. 3.

This

This quality, ſo neceſſary to the communication of our ideas, eminently diſtinguiſhes the writings of the New Teſtament. Inſomuch, that it may be eaſily ſhewn, whatever difficulties occur in the ſacred volumes do not ariſe from any imperfect information, cauſed by this local or nominal barbarity of ſtile, but either from the ſublime or obſcure nature of the things treated of; or from the intentional conciſeneſs of the writer; who in the caſual mention of any thing unrelated, or not eſſential, to the Diſpenſation, always obſerves a ſtudied brevity. SERM. 6.

But further, ſuppoſing, that, in general, an authentic Scripture, compoſed for the rule of Religion, demanded this quality of local eloquence [c], it

[c] What hath been ſaid above plainly ſhews, that no ſuch local eloquence is required. Yet as there is much of this ornament of ſtyle, (and more imagined) in the books of the Old Teſtament, it may not be improper to explain the reaſon of it; and ſhew the conſiſtency between that ornament of ſtyle and the principles here laid down.

1. Firſt then, we may obſerve, that Judaiſm was not an *univerſal* Religion, but delivered for the uſe of a ſingle people; ſo that the inconveniencies of a local eloquence could not ariſe from the uſe of it.

2. This Religion had a *public* part [ſee *D. L.* B. v.] and, conſequently, abounded with rites and ceremonies, to which, an ornamented ſtyle was very ſuitable, in the rituals of their holy offices.

3. Several of the books of the Old Teſtament are, in their *nature and genius, poetical and rhetorical*; and ſo ſeem to have demanded a ſtyle conformable to the ſubject.

4. But laſtly, tho' the *truths* in all theſe books were inſpired, we are not to ſuppoſe the ſame of the *words and language*, as in the Pagan oracles, where the Prieſteſs or Prophet profeſſed only to convey the ſounds of the inſpiring deity, thro' human organs: The *Spirits of the Prophets* of true Religion being

SERM. 6. it would yet be very unſuitable to the peculiar genius of the GOSPEL. It might eaſily be known to have been the purpoſe of Providence, tho' ſuch purpoſe had not been expreſly declared, that the Goſpel ſhould bear all poſſible marks of its divine original; as well in the courſe of its progreſs, as in the circumſtances of its promulgation. To this end, the human inſtruments of its conveyance were mean and illiterate, and choſen from among the loweſt of the people: that when the world ſaw itſelf converted by the *fooliſhneſs of preaching*, as the learned Apoſtle in great humility thinks fit to call it, unbelievers might have no pretence to aſcribe its ſucceſs, to the parts, or ſtations, or authority of the preachers. Now had the language inſpired into theſe illiterate men been the eloquence of Plato or Tully, Providence would have appeared to counteract its own meaſures, and to defeat the purpoſe beſt calculated to advance its glory. But God is wiſe, tho' man's a fool. The courſe of Providence was uniform and conſtant. It not only choſe the weakeſt inſtruments, but carefully kept out of their hands that powerful weapon of WORDS, which their adverſaries might ſo eaſily have wreſted to the diſhonour of the Goſpel. St. Paul, who, amongſt theſe inſtruments, was, for the like wiſe purpoſes, made an exception to the general choice, yet induſtriouſly proſecuted that ſublime view, for

being declared to be *ſubject to the Prophets. For where the ſpirit of the Lord is* (ſays the Apoſtle) *there is liberty.* Hence we find the language of each writer to be different; conformable to his ſtation and endowments, his natural talents and complexion.

the

the ſake of which the choice was made, by re- SERM. jecting all other weapons but thoſe of the Spirit, 6. to ſpread abroad the conqueſts of the Son of God. *My ſpeech* (ſays he) *and my preaching was not with inticing words of man's wiſdom, but in the demonſtration of the Spirit and of power.* He ſubjoins the reaſon,—*that their faith ſhould not ſtand in the wiſdom of men, but in the power of God.*—*Therefore* (ſaith he again) *God hath choſen the fooliſh things of the world to confound the wiſe; and the weak things of the world to coufound the mighty*[d]. And leſt it ſhould be ſaid, that this was an affectation of deſpiſing advantages which they themſelves could not reach, it pleaſed Providence that this declaration ſhould be made, not by one of the more ſordid and idiotic of the number; but by Him, to whom both nature and diſcipline had given powers to arrive at all the heights of Greek and Roman eloquence. For we ſee, by what has, now and then, accidentally flamed out, in the fervor of his reaſoning, that he had a ſtrong and clear diſcernment; a quick and lively imagination; and an extenſive and intimate acquaintance with thoſe maſters in moral painting, the claſſic writers: all which, he proudly ſacrificed to the glory of the *everlaſting Goſpel.* Nor does he appear to have been conſcious of any inconſiſtency between an inſpired language and its nominal barbarity of ſtyle. For having had occaſion, in the following words, to remind the Corinthians of the abundance of ſpiritual grace beſtowed upon him,——*I thank my God I ſpeak with tongues more than you all*[e], he yet tells them,

[d] 1 Cor. ii. 4. [e] 1 Cor. xiv. 18.

that

SERM. 6. that he is *rude in ſpeech* [f]. Which naturally leads me to what I have ſtill further to obſerve for the illuſtration of this argument.

And here, I will be bold to affirm, that the STYLE of the New Teſtament, even on ſuppoſition of the truth of what the learned perſon ſays in its diſcredit, is ſo far from proving the language not to be divinely inſpired, that it bears indeed, one certain mark of that original.

I will not pretend to point out which books of the New Teſtament were or were not compoſed by thoſe who had the Greek tongue thus miraculouſly infuſed into them. But this, I think, one may venture to ſay, that the ſtyle of a writer ſo inſpired, would be preciſely ſuch, as we find it in theſe books.

For if it be allowed, what no one can doubt, that a ſtrange language, acquired in the ordinary way, by an illiterate man, would be full of the idioms of his native tongue, as the Scripture Greek is obſerved to be full of Syriaſms and Hebraiſms: how can it be pretended that a ſtrange language inſpired into illiterate men, as thoſe were on the day of Pentecoſt, ſhould have any other properties or conditions? Let us weigh the caſes impartially.

Every language conſiſts of two diſtinct parts, the ſingle terms, and the phraſes and idioms. The firſt, as far as concerns names eſpecially, is by mere arbitrary impoſition, tho' on artificial principles common to all men: The ſecond inſenſibly and conſtantly ariſes from the manners and tempers of the native uſers; and ſo becomes, tho'

[f] 2 Cor. xi. 6.

leſs

leſs arbitrary, as various and different as the ſeveral tribes and nations of mankind. The firſt, therefore, is unrelated to every thing but to language in general; the ſecond has an intimate connection with the faſhions, notions, and opinions of each diſtinct and different people. SERM. 6.

Now the uſual way illiterate men apply themſelves to learn a foreign ſpeech, is principally to treaſure up in their memory the ſignification of the terms. Hence, when they come to talk or write in the acquired language, their ſpeech is found to be full of the idioms of their native tongue.

Suppoſe then, this foreign language to be inſtantaneouſly introduced, by a ſuperior power, into the minds of ſuch a ſort of men. Will the effect be different as the cauſe? By no means. The impreſſion muſt be made, either by fixing the terms or ſingle words only, and their ſignification, in the memory, as for inſtance, Greek words correſponding to the Syriac or Hebrew: or elſe, together with that ſimple impreſſion, by inriching the mind with all the phraſes and idioms of the language ſo inſpired. But the doing this ſeems to imply, and require a previous impreſſion of the manners, notions, faſhions, and opinions of the people to whom that language is native: becauſe the phraſe and idiom ariſes from, and is dependent on, thoſe manners: and therefore the force of ſuch idiom, when inſtantaneouſly impreſſed, can be underſtood only in proportion to the knowledge of thoſe manners: and underſtood they were to be; for the recipients of theſe ſpiritual gifts were not mere paſſive organs, but rational

SERM. 6. rational diſpenſers. Now this would be a waſte of miracles, without ſufficient cauſe or occaſion; the Syriac or Hebrew idiom, to which the Jews were enabled of themſelves to adapt the Greek or any other words, abundantly ſerving every uſeful purpoſe; which all centred in being CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD: For, that thing, for the doing of which no reaſonable cauſe can be aſſigned, muſt needs be deemed unreaſonable to be done. We conclude, therefore, that the whole of what theſe men got of a ſtrange language, by inſpiration, was the TERMS, and that congruity in the uſe of them, which is dependent thereon. To ſuppoſe then ſuch a ſpecies of inſpired knowledge in *the gift of tongues*, as implies all the native peculiarities, or, if you will, the elegancies of them; for, the more a language becomes coloured by the character and manners of thoſe to whom it is native, the more elegant it is eſteemed; to ſuppoſe this, I ſay, is a ſuperſtitious fancy, and repugnant to all the concluſions of reaſon.

From what hath been obſerved, it follows, that if the ſtyle of the New Teſtament were indeed derived from that language which was miraculouſly impreſſed upon the Apoſtles on the day of Pentecoſt, it muſt be juſt ſuch a one as in reality, we find it to be; that is to ſay, Greek words in the Syriac and Hebrew idiom. The concluſion from the whole is this, That a nominal or local barbarity of ſtyle is ſo far from being an objection to its miraculous acquiſition, that it is one certain mark of that very original.

All the force of the objection, that now remains, reſts on another as fanciful hypotheſis, to be

be conſidered in its place, namely, That the New Teſtament is of divine inſpiration in that high and extreme ſenſe which ſuppoſes the Holy Spirit to ſpeak immediately and inceſſantly in every ſound, and the pens and efforts of the writers to be only organs or inſtruments, thro' which his words are unvariably conveyed: Allow this to be the caſe, and then indeed, there is ſomewhat more pretence for expecting that nominal purity and local elegance of ſtyle, ſo keenly ſought after by the falſely delicate, even while they are buſied in the important work of examining the terms of their Salvation. SERM. 6.

We have now gone thro' the celebrated writer's argumcnts, and ſhewn they have no ſupport in fact or nature to induce the concluſion he would draw from them: and might here leave the ſubject; as the common opinion remains unimpaired by his attack, and ſtill in poſſeſſion of all the circumſtances of credit in which he found it.

But ſince this new interpretation of the tranſitory nature of the gift, and the momentary uſe of the power conferred by it, may be applied by licentious men to purpoſes the learned perſon never intended, it cannot be too carefully ſcrutinized.

Who hath not heard of the magic wonders of the imagination, when charmed and enflamed by fanaticiſm? and, tho' we be ignorant of its utmoſt force, yet we know enough to convince us, that this enthuſiaſtic faculty of the mind is capable of producing very extraordinary effects. There are many well atteſted caſes, in modern hiſtory (altho'

SERM. 6. (altho' we ſhould agree that theſe ſtories have loſt nothing of the marvelous in their telling) of Enthuſiaſts, who, in extatic fits, have talked very fluently in the learned languages, of which they had but an imperfect knowledge in their ſober intervals[s]: Now were it generally believed, that the ſpeaking with ſtrange tongues, in the firſt ages of Chriſtianity, was a mere fleeting, tranſitory power, the bold licence of theſe times would be ready to conclude, that it was much of the ſame kind with that we ſee acted amongſt modern fanatics. For let us conſider how the matter would be thought to ſtand, on the repreſentation of this learned perſon. A ſudden flaſh of lightning, under the figure of cloven tongues, kindles the firey imaginations of a number of enthuſiaſtic men, met together in general aſſembly, and heating one another's fanaticiſm by mutual colliſion; and, in this temper, *they began to ſpeak with tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.* I ſhall therefore endeavour to ſhew, in the laſt place, that this new interpretation contradicts

[s] "When I ſaw the Gentleman (who has writ lately in "defence of revived prophecy, and has ſince fallen himſelf "into the prophetic extacies) lately under *an agitation* (as "they call it) uttering prophecy in a pompous *Latin* ſtyle, "of which out of his extaſy, it ſeems, he is wholly incap-"able, it brought into my mind the Latin poet's deſcription "of the ſibyl." *etc. Ld. Shaft. Charact. Lett. concern. Enthuſ.* ſect. 6. And it is remarkable, that inſtances of this kind had occurred ſo frequently, that Thyræus, a Popiſh Exorciſt, as blinded as he was by the ſuperſtitious impiety of demoniacal *poſſeſſions*, has in his *Directory*, for the uſe of his Brotherhood, expreſly declared that the *ſpeaking ſtrange languages* is no certain ſign of *poſſeſſion*: and warns the exorciſt againſt this illuſion. *De Dæmoniacis*, c. xxii.

what

what SCRIPTURE itſelf expreſly delivers of the USE of this *gift of tongues*, on the day of Pentecoſt. SERM. 6.

The learned writer affirms, that the knowledge was tranſitory, ſerving only for an occaſional ſign, and not intended for the uſe of the apoſtolic miſſion. Now Jeſus himſelf tells us it was intended for that uſe; and to be given for the work of the miniſtry. For on his leaving the world, he comforts his diſciples with this promiſe: *But ye ſhall receive power, after that the Holy Ghoſt is come upon you: and ye ſhall be* WITNESSES *unto me unto the* UTTERMOST PART OF THE EARTH[h]. And it is to be obſerved that this circumſtance is recorded by the ſacred hiſtorian who relates the miracle at Pentecoſt, as an introduction to his narrative of what paſt on that occaſion. By which we are given to underſtand, that the promiſe of Jeſus was fulfilled on that day: and the *power to be received*, was the power then given. Now the uſe of this gift of tongues was, as Jeſus informs his diſciples, to enable them to become *witneſſes unto him unto the uttermoſt part of the world.* And we find St. Paul had this gift; not only in the largeſt meaſure, but in a proportioned duration: for, the Apoſtle endeavouring to moderate the exceſſive value the Corinthians ſet upon ſpiritual gifts, leſt the common objection ſhould be made to him, that he undervalued advantages which himſelf did not poſſeſs, he obſerves, with regard to the moſt ſplendid of them all, the *gift of tongues*, he had abundantly the advantage. *I thank my God*

[h] Acts i. 8.

(ſays

SERM. 6. (ſays he) *I ſpeak with tongues more than you all*[i]. The occaſion ſhews, he means a ſpiritual gift; and the mark he uſes, of the preſent time, ſhews he means a gift, at that time in his poſſeſſion. But why did he *ſpeak with more tongues than them all?* For a good reaſon: he was the diſtinguiſhed apoſtle of the Gentiles; and was to preach the word amongſt remote and barbarous nations. Whom, then, ſhall we believe? Shall we take his word, who promiſed the gift; his, on whom the gift was largely beſtowed, or the conjecture of this learned and ingenious modern?

But if, after all, men will ſtill have it, that the power was temporary, and, like that of healing, poſſeſſed by the Diſciples only occaſionally, we need be in no pain for the conſequence. For let it be only granted that the power returned as often as there was occaſion, and 'tis no great matter where it reſided in the interim. And that it did ſo return, if it was not conſtant, is beyond diſpute; for then St. Paul's words muſt be underſtood in this ſenſe, where he ſays, *I thank my God, I ſpeak with tongues more than you all*[k]. But neither reaſon nor the truth of things will ſuffer us to be thus compliant. The power of healing, or of working miracles (to which the learned perſon compares the gift of tongues) is, during the whole courſe of its operation, one continued arreſt or diverſion of the general laws of matter and motion: it was fit, therefore, this power ſhould be occaſional. But the *ſpeaking with*

[i] Chap. xiv. v. 18.——μᾶλλον γλώσσαις λαλῶν.
[k] 1 Cor. xiv. 18.

tongues,

tongues, when once the gift is conferred, becomes, from thenceforth, a natural power; juſt as the free and perfect uſe of the members of the body after they have been reſtored by miracle to their natural functions. Therefore, it was as much in the courſe of things for an Apoſtle, whom the Holy Spirit, on the day of Pentecoſt, had enabled to ſpeak a ſtrange language, ever afterwards to have the uſe of that language; as it was for the cripple, to whom Jeſus had reſtored the uſe of his limbs, on the ſabbath day, ever afterwards to walk, run, and perform all the functions of men in perfect health. In one thing, indeed, the power of healing, and of ſpeaking with ſtrange tongues, agreed; that, as the Diſciples could not heal at all times, ſo neither could they ſpeak at all times in what ſtrange dialect they fancied to converſe. Yet when once, by the divine power, they had been enabled to ſpeak and underſtand a language, they could not but retain the uſe of it, with the ſame facility as if they had acquired it in the ordinary way of learning. But the confuſion in this matter, and the learned perſon's embarras in ſtating the queſtion, ariſe from not diſtinguiſhing between the ACTIVE POWER and the PASSIVE GIFT. In the firſt, the Apoſtles are to be conſidered as the workers of a miracle; in the latter, as the perſons on whom a miracle was performed. SERM. 6.

Thus far with regard to this extraordinary deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt, as the guide of truth. And this being both the FIRST FRUITS, the TYPE, and the SEAL of all inſpired knowledge, the Sacred Hiſtorian thought fit to give us a circumſtantial narrative of the fact.

SERM. 6.

The other endowments of the Spirit of Truth he hath only occaſionally mentioned. So that had not the ſubject of one of St. Paul's epiſtles led the writer to enumerate thoſe various gifts, as afterwards diſtributed amongſt the Faithful, we ſhould have had but an imperfect knowledge of them. The Church of Corinth was fooliſhly elated with ſpiritual pride; which St. Paul endeavoured to repreſs; and in applying his remedy, he begins with reckoning up thoſe various graces, the credit of which they had abuſed to the indulgence of this unhappy temper —*concerning ſpiritual gifts*, ſays he, *I would not have you ignorant* —— *Now there are diverſities of gifts, but the ſame ſpirit* —— *To one is given, by the ſpirit, the* WORD OF WISDOM; *to another, the* WORD OF KNOWLEDGE *by the ſame ſpirit; to another* FAITH *by the ſame ſpirit; to another the* GIFTS OF HEALING *by the ſame ſpirit; to another* WORKING OF MIRACLES; *to another* PROPHECY; *to another* DISCERNING OF SPIRITS [a]. And when he comes to apply his premiſſes, and ſhew the inferiority of all theſe gifts, to charity, he recapitulates the moſt diſtinguiſhed of them in the following manner: *Tho' I have the gift of* PROPHECY, *and underſtand all* MYSTERIES, *and all* KNOWLEDGE, *and tho' I have all* FAITH *ſo that I could remove mountains, and have no charity, I am nothing* [b].

In explaining the nature of theſe gifts, the two paſſages will afford light to one another. Let us obſerve the Apoſtle's order.

[a] 1 Cor. xii. 1, et ſeq. [b] Ch. xiii. 2.

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The firſt he mentions is the WORD OF WISDOM [c]. By which, I would underſtand, *all the great principles of natural religion* [d]. The ancients uſed the terms in this peculiar ſenſe: and we can hardly give them any other in the place before us, where we ſee them diſtinguiſhed from the WORD OF KNOWLEDGE [e], which follows, and evidently means, *all the great principles of the revealed*; the term γνῶσις, being as peculiarly applied by Chriſtian writers to revealed religion [f], as σοφία is by the Gentiles, to the natural: and is no leſs a generic term than the other, being mentioned in the next chapter with one of its ſpecies,—*all* MYSTERY *and all knowledge*: for *myſteries* is that part which regards the interpretation of ſuch jewiſh prophecies as concern the new Diſpenſation. In a word, our Apoſtle, ſpeaking in another place, of Chriſt, who perfected REVELATION on NATURAL RELIGION, uſes the two terms in theſe aſſigned ſignifications, —*In whom*, ſays he, *are hid all the treaſures of* WISDOM *and* KNOWLEDGE [g]. SERM. 6.

The next new gift the Apoſtle names is FAITH. In the following chapter, where theſe graces are again recapitulated, he explains its nature to us,

[c] Λόγῳ σοφίας.

[d] In this ſenſe St. Paul uſes the word Col. iv. 5. Ἐν σοφίᾳ περιπατεῖτε πρὸς τοὺς ἔξω.

[e] Λόγῳ γνώσεως.

[f] St. Paul uſes it in this ſenſe, 2 Cor. xi. 6. Εἰ δὲ καὶ ἰδιώτης τῷ λόγῳ, ἀλλ' οὐ τῇ ΓΝΩΣΕΙ. And St. Peter, 1 Ep. iii. 7. Οἱ ἄνδρες ὁμοίως, συνοικοῦντες κατὰ ΓΝΩΣΙΝ. Hence thoſe early heretics, who ſo much deformed the ſimplicity and purity of the Chriſtian Faith by viſionary pretences to a ſuperior *knowledge* of revelation, took their name from it.

[g] Ἐν ᾧ εἰσὶ πάντες οἱ θησαυροὶ τῆς ΣΟΦΙΑΣ καὶ τῆς ΓΝΩΣΕΩΣ ἀπόκρυφοι. Coloſſ. ii. 3.

SERM. 6. in calling it a *faith, which could remove mountains*, or ſuch a one as was attended with the power of controlling nature.

The two other gifts, which follow, of HEALING and WORKING MIRACLES, are the ſpecieſes of this genus. By *healing* is meant that ſalutary aſſiſtance adminiſtred in a ſolemn office of the church, as directed and deſcribed by St. James[h]: And by the *working of miracles*, a more private and extempore exerciſe of the ſame power, tho' leſs confined in its object[i].

PROPHECY, which comes next, I ſuppoſe, means the power of foretelling the future fortunes of the church, to the comfort and edification (as St. Paul expreſſes it) of the aſſembly. *He that propheſieth* (ſaith he) *ſpeaketh unto men to edification and exhortation and comfort*[k]. And theſe adjuncts conſtantly attending the act of prophecy, became in a little time to take the name. But its proper ſenſe, and that in which it is to be underſtood in this place, is the foretelling things to come: which Jeſus himſelf declares to be one eſſential part in the manifeſtation of the Holy Spirit. *Howbeit when the Spirit of truth is come, he*

[h] *Is any ſick amongſt you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let him pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of* FAITH *ſhall ſave the ſick, and the Lord ſhall raiſe him up.* James, Gen. Ep. v. 14.

[i] The χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων properly expreſſes gifts belonging to the church, as ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων, implies virtue reſiding in the operator, and peculiar to him. Beſides, we may obſerve, that the χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων was a leſs degree of miraculous power than the ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων, and is expreſly intimated ſo to be v. 28.

[k] 1 Cor. xiv. 3.

will

will guide you into all truth—and he will ſhew you things to come[l]. SERM. 6.

The laſt of theſe gifts, in the order of things, as well as in the Apoſtle's enumeration, is the DISCERNING OF SPIRITS. The reputation attending the exerciſe of theſe extraordinary endowments would be a ſtrong temptation to impoſtors to mimic them, as we ſee it was to Simon the magician. It graciouſly pleaſed the Holy Spirit, therefore, amidſt theſe gifts, to beſtow one, whoſe office it ſhould be to bring all the others to the teſt[m], by the power it had of diſtinguiſhing between true and falſe inſpiration, where accidental ambiguity or deſigned impoſture had made the matter doubtful, or uncertain.

It is obſervable, that in the liſt of theſe various endowments of the ſpirit of truth the Apoſtle hath intermixed the power of WORKING MIRACLES; and, with great propriety: there being the ſame reaſon for the Holy Ghoſt to manifeſt his credentials from Heaven, in the exerciſe of the office of Inlightener and Comforter, as for the Son to manifeſt his, in the promulgation of the office of Redeemer.

Theſe gifts, the Apoſtle tells us, were ſeparately diſtributed amongſt the faithful members of Chriſt's myſtical body, the Church. But the

[l] John xvi. 13.——καὶ τὰ ἐρχόμενα ἀναγγελεῖ ὑμῖν.

[m] διακρίσεις πνευμάτων —— διάκρισις is uſed in the other two places in this ſignification——μὴ εἰς διακρίσεις διαλογισμῶν,—— Rom. xiv. 1. πρὸς διάκρισιν καλοῦ τε καὶ κακοῦ, Heb. v. 14.—— πνευμάτων, *of ſpirits* or divine afflations. And ſo the author uſes it a little after, πνεύματα προφητῶν, Ch. xiv. 32.

SERM. 6. Apoſtles[n], as Scripture leads us to conclude, had them all in conjunction; exerciſed them in fuller meaſure[o]; ſupported them with large additions[p]; and (as hath been proved of one of them, at leaſt) poſſeſſed them by a more durable title.

But for a fuller account of their NATURE, and their USE, we muſt have recourſe to ſacred Scripture, which not only records, but CONTAINS the various fruits of them.

And as the greateſt of theſe fruits, the INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE itſelf, hath been lately called in queſtion, I ſhall chuſe that ſubject for the topic of what I have further to ſay on this matter.

We may obſerve, that the miniſtry of the firſt preachers of our holy Religion conſiſted of two parts; The temporary and occaſional inſtructions of thoſe Chriſtians whom they had brought to the knowledge and faith of Jeſus: and the care of compoſing a WRITTEN RULE for the direction of the CHURCH throughout all ages. Now it being confeſſed, becauſe by the hiſtory of the ACTS, it is proved, that the Apoſtles were divinely inſpired in the diſcharge of the tempo-

[n] *And with great power gave the apoſtles witneſs of the reſurrection of the Lord Jeſus: and great grace was upon them all*, Acts iv. 33.

[o] *I thank my God, I ſpeak with tongues more than you all*, 1 Cor. xiv. 18.

[p] *Now, Brethren, if I come unto you, ſpeaking with tongues, what ſhall I profit you, except I ſhall ſpeak unto you either by* REVELATION, *or by knowledge, or by propheſying, or by doctrine?* 1 Cor. xiv. 6. And this additional gift of *Revelation*, which conveyed the further knowledge of God's will in the Goſpel, ſeems properly to have been appropriated to the Apoſtles, with deſign to dignify their office.

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rary part; it muſt be very ſtrong evidence indeed, which can induce a reaſonable man to ſuſpect that they were left to themſelves in the execution of the Other? SERM. 6.

Their preaching could only profit their contemporaries: For inſtructions conveyed to future ages by tradition are ſoon loſt and forgotten; or, what is worſe, polluted with fables. It was reaſonable, therefore, to think, that the church ſhould be provided with a written Rule. The gracious Providence of God had made this proviſion. And the Scriptures of the New Teſtament were received by all men as divine oracles, as the dictates of the Holy Spirit, till ſuperſtition, extending the notion of inſpiration to an extravagant height, Infidelity took that advantage to deny any inſpiration at all. For extremes beget, and when they have begotten, are ſuffered, in order to preſerve the ballance of the moral ſyſtem, as frequently to ſupport, as to deſtroy one another: That, while they ſubſiſt, each may defeat the miſchiefs the other threatens; and when they fall, both of them may fall together.

I ſhall therefore take the liberty to expoſe the extravagance of either ſyſtem: and then endeavour to ſettle the TRUE NOTION OF SCRIPTURE INSPIRATION.

1. We have ſeen how largely gifted the Apoſtles were for the buſineſs of their miniſtry. They worked miracles, they ſpoke with tongues, they explained myſteries, they interpreted prophecies, they diſcerned the true from the falſe operations of he Spirit. And all this, for the temporary and occaſional diſcharge of their miſſion. Is it poſ-

SERM. 6. ſible, then, to ſuppoſe them to be deſerted by the Inlightener, when they ſat down to the other part of their work; to frame a rule for the laſting ſervice of the church? Can we believe, that that ſpirit, which ſo bountifully aſſiſted them in the pulpit, was withdrawn from them when they entered into their cloſets: or, when their ſpeech was with all power, that their writings ſhould convey no more than the fallible dictates of humanity? To ſuppoſe the gifts of the Spirit to be ſo capriciouſly beſtowed, would look more like a mockery than an endowment; and to believe all this, would be a harder taſk than any thing the Deiſt objects to our credulity. Let us conclude, therefore, that what the Apoſtles had for their temporary uſe, they had, at leaſt in as large a meaſure, for the conſtant ſervice of the church.

2. The Scriptures of the Old Teſtament are expreſly declared to be inſpired, in that general propoſition of St. Paul, *All Scripture is given by inſpiration of God*[a], where he recommends the ſtudy of them to his ſon Timothy. Now if, in the Moſaic Diſpenſation, the written rule was *given by inſpiration of God*, where the Church was governed by a long ſeries and ſucceſſion of Prophets, and daily directed by oracular reſponſes; and both aſſiſted by an extraordinary adminiſtration of Providence; ſuch as might well ſeem to ſuperſede the neceſſity of another inſpiration; how certainly may we conclude, that the ſame divine goodneſs would give an inſpired Scripture to the Chriſtian Church, where the miraculous influence of the Holy Spirit is ſuppoſed

[a] 2 Tim. iii. 16.

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to have ceaſed with the apoſtolic ages; and the adminiſtration of Providence is only general. Nor can it be ſaid, that what St. Paul predicates of Scripture muſt be confined to the LAW (whoſe very name, indeed, implies inſpiration) ſince the largeneſs of his terms, *all Scripture*, extends to the whole canon of the Old Teſtament, as then received by the two Churches. And this general expreſſion was the more expedient, as the Hiſtoric and Prophetic writings had not the outward marks of this quality in ſo full a meaſure as the *Law*; which was given amidſt all the pomp of majeſty, manifeſting itſelf in the ſenſible form of Miracles and Prodigies. The canonical books of the OLD Teſtament, therefore, being inſpired, reaſon directs us to expect the ſame quality in the NEW. And, as in THAT, amongſt ſeveral occaſional writings, there was the fundamental record of the Pentateuch, and, in the volumes of the Prophets, the oracular predictions of the future fortunes of the church to the firſt coming of the Meſſiah; ſo in THIS, beſides the occaſional Epiſtles, there is the authentic record of the Goſpel-covenant, and, in the Revelations of St. John, thoſe divine predictions continued to the ſecond coming of the Saviour of the world. SERM. 6.

3. The reaſon of the thing likewiſe ſupports us in concluding for this inſpiration. An univerſal rule of human conduct implies as unlimited an obedience: the nature of ſuch a rule demanding it to be received entire; and to be obſerved in every article. But when once it is ſuppoſed to come to us from Heaven, thro' the canal of an uninſpired inſtrument, liable to error both in the receipt

SERM. 6. receipt and the delivery of it, men would be perpetually tempted to acknowledge juſt as much as they liked to believe, or were diſpoſed to practiſe; and reject the reſt as a mere human invention. Nay, the very inſtances which the writers againſt inſpiration give of its not being afforded ſeem to ſhew the neceſſity of the gift: ſuch as the imperfect knowledge the Apoſtles had of the genius of Chriſtianity; their diſputes and differences with one another; their miſtakes in matters of eaſy prevention, tho' of little conſequence: For if the Compoſers of a rule of Faith for the univerſal Church were thus naturally defective in hiſtoric and religious knowledge, What ſecurity could we have for their not miſleading us, unleſs prevented by the watchfulneſs and guidance of the Holy Spirit, while they were engaged in this important taſk?

I am ſufficiently ſenſible of the weakneſs and folly of this kind of reaſoning, which concludes from *right* to *fact*; and becauſe we imagine a thing to be expedient, uſeful, or neceſſary in God's moral government, that therefore he hath in reality provided it. Thus the Pontific Doctors, in their arguments for the ſtanding power of miracles, and the appointment of an infallible Guide, having endeavoured to ſhew that the one was neceſſary for thoſe WITHOUT, and the other, for thoſe WITHIN, would draw us to conclude, that the true Church hath, in fact, the uſe and exerciſe of MIRACLES and INFALLIBILITY.

But the caſes are widely different. It is by no means agreed, that the Church, after the apoſtolic ages, was in poſſeſſion of ſo large a portion of the

the Holy Spirit as to enable either the HEAD OR MEMBERS to exert the powers in queſtion: whereas it is confeſſed, that, at the time theſe Scriptures were written, the Compoſers of them were divinely inſpired for the occaſional work of their miniſtry. And the only queſtion in debate is, Whether that Spirit, which aided them in defending the Goſpel before the tribunals of Kings and Magiſtrates [a]; in working miracles before the multitude of Unbelievers; and in propheſying and explaining myſteries to the aſſemblies of the Faithful, did accompany or deſert them, when they retired to their cloſets, to compoſe a rule of faith for the conſtant ſervice of the Church? SERM. 6.

4. But laſtly we have the clear teſtimony of Scripture for this inſpiration. And tho' the *bearing witneſs to itſelf* [b] might be juſtly objected, in an argument addreſſed to unbelievers, yet this, which is urged only againſt ſuch Chriſtians as doubt or disbelieve the inſpiration of the New Teſtament, hath all the requiſite force of logical propriety.

I venture, therefore, to affirm, that St. Paul, in the general propoſition quoted above, which ſays, *All Scripture is given by inſpiration of God* [c], neceſſarily includes the Scriptures in queſtion: what he predicates of *all Scripture*, taking in the *new*

[a] *And when they bring you unto the ſynagogues, and unto magiſtrates, and powers, take ye no thought how, or what thing ye ſhall anſwer, or what ye ſhall ſay: for the Holy Ghoſt ſhall teach you in the ſame hour, what ye ought to ſay*, Luke xii. 11, 12.

[b] *If I bear witneſs of myſelf, my witneſs is not true*, John v. 31.

[c] Πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος, καὶ etc.

as

SERM. 6. as well as *old*; as well as that which was to be written, as that already collected into a Canon. For the term *Scripture*, means, in general, as the context leads us to underſtand it, a religious rule, infallible in its direction, for the conduct of human life in belief and practice: it being under that idea he recommends the Scriptures to Timothy. The general aſſertion, therefore, amounts to this, "That divine inſpiration is an eſſential quality of every Scripture, which conſtitutes the LAW or RULE of a Religion coming from God."

On the whole, then, we muſt conclude, that *all the Scriptures of the New Teſtament were given by inſpiration of God.* And thus the prophetic promiſe of our bleſſed Maſter that the *Comforter ſhould abide with us for ever*, was eminently fulfilled. For though, according to the promiſe, his ordinary influence occaſionally aſſiſts the faithful of all ages, yet his conſtant abode and ſupreme illumination is in the ſacred Scriptures of the New Teſtament.

It only remains to be conſidered, In what ſenſe we are to underſtand this inſpiration?

A ſpurious opinion, begotten by ſuperſtition in the Jewiſh church, and nurſed up by miſtaken piety in the Chriſtian, hath paſſed, as it were, into a kind of article of faith, "That every word and letter of the New Teſtament was dictated by the Holy Spirit, in ſuch a ſenſe as that the writers were but the paſſive organs thro' which his language was conveyed [a].

But

[a] Superſtition ſeldom knows where to ſtop. The Mahometans improved upon this fancy, and repreſented their Scriptures

But there are many objections to this high idea of inſpiration. SERM. 6.

1. It would be putting the Holy Spirit on an unneceſſary employment: for much of theſe ſacred volumes being hiſtorical, and of facts and ſayings which had fallen under the obſervation of the writers. They did not need the aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit to do this part of their buſineſs for them.

2. Had the Scriptures been inſpired by an organical conveyance, there muſt have been the moſt perfect agreement amongſt the ſeveral writers of the Goſpels, in every circumſtance of the ſmalleſt FACT. But we ſee there is not this perfect agreement. In ſome minute particulars, which regard neither faith, nor manners, neither the truth nor the certainty of hiſtory in general, the ſeveral writers vary from one another. A diſagreement, tho' it oppoſes the notion of a verbal inſpiration, yet, which is of infinitely more importance, gives credit to the native truth and integrity of the hiſtorians; and proves they did not write in concert, or copy from one another's accounts; but that each deſcribed the proper impreſſions which the ſame facts had made upon himſelf.

3. Was this the true idea of Scripture inſpiration, that the ſeveral writers were but mere organs of the Spirit, the turn of STYLE had been

tures as ſent them down, ready written, from Heaven: and being now got into ſo fair a train, the next theological queſtion in honour of the Alcoran, was whether it was *created* or *uncreated*: and the orthodox *determination*, we may be ſure, was in favour of the latter.

one

SERM. 6. one and the ſame throughout all the ſacred books: whereas we find it to be very different and various; and always correſponding to the conditions, tempers, and capacities, of the writers.

4. Laſtly, the words of Scripture muſt in this caſe have been preſerved throughout all ages, perfectly PURE and FREE, from the corruptions and miſtakes of tranſcribers. For if it were expedient, uſeful, and ſorting with the views of divine wiſdom, for every word and letter to be inſpired, it then became neceſſary for every word and letter to be preſerved uncorrupt; otherwiſe, the Holy Spirit would appear to have worked in vain. Now common experience aſſures us that this is, by no means, the caſe; frequent tranſcribing having occaſioned numerous variations in words and phraſes throughout all the Scriptures of the New Teſtament. But tho' this oppoſes the notion of organic inſpiration, yet the nature of the variations, which never diſturb the ſenſe nor obſcure a ſingle propoſition of faith, or precept of good manners, affords us a noble inſtance of the good providence of God, in bringing down to us thoſe Scriptures, deſtined for an INFALLIBLE RULE, incorrupt and intire, in all eſſential and even material points; though, after eſcaping the hands of ſo many factious Schiſmatics, zealous Bigots, and deſigning Seducers, they had a long journey ſtill to make thro' the dark and thorny labyrinth of Monkery and ignorance.

From all this, we conclude, that the notion of organic inſpiration muſt needs be falſe. And yet it is ſeen to be a certain truth, that the Scriptures of

of the New Teſtament *were given by inſpiration of God.* SERM. 6.

In what ſenſe, therefore, is this inſpiration to be underſtood? Without doubt, in this (as it is the only one which agrees with appearances, and fully anſwers the purpoſe) "That the Holy Spirit ſo guarded the pens of theſe writers that no error of importance fell from them: by enlightening them with his actual inſpiration in all ſuch matters as were neceſſary for the knowledge and inſtruction of the Chriſtian Church, which either thro' ignorance or prejudice they would have falſely or partially repreſented; and by preſerving them, in the more ordinary courſe of Providence from any miſtakes of conſequence in the narrative of thoſe things whereof they had acquired a competent knowledge in the common way of information. In a word, inceſſantly watching over theſe his agents; but with ſo ſuſpended a hand as permitted the uſe, and left them to the guidance of, their own faculties, while they kept clear of error; and then only interpoſing when, without the divine aſſiſtance, they would have deviated from truth. This ſeems to be the only rational idea of the inſpiration in queſtion: And books written under ſuch an influence would acquire all the requiſite properties of an INFALLIBLE RULE; which is the ſole end of an inſpired Scripture.

But it is not only the nature and genius, the ſtate and condition of ſacred Scripture which ſupports this idea of inſpiration; its expreſs declarations lead to the ſame concluſion. St. Peter ſpeaking of the Epiſtles of Paul, ſays, he wrote them—

according

SERM. 6. *according to the wiſdom given unto him* [a]. Now, as by the character of this *wiſdom*, which is ſaid to be GIVEN, we muſt conclude it to be *the wiſdom which is from above*; ſo from its uſe, the Apoſtle being ſaid to write ACCORDING TO *the wiſdom given*, we muſt conclude, that *the ſpirit of the Prophet was ſubject to the prophet*, and ruled irreſiſtibly in nothing but in ſecuring him from error.

But it will be ſaid, that on this idea of inſpiration we ſhall never be able to diſtinguiſh what parts were written under the immediate influence of the Spirit, and what were only of human compoſition. Allow this to be the caſe, and that we are unable to make this diſtinction. Where is the harm or inconvenience ariſing from it? All the aſſurance we want is, that every part of Scripture, which but remotely concerns either faith and practice, is infallibly true. It is of little conſequence to know, how that truth came to be ſecured: whether by direct inſpiration; or by that virtual guidance of the Spirit which preſerved the writers of it from error. Scripture is the rule of Chriſtian conduct; and if this rule be known to be unerring, it is all that is wanting to effectuate its end.

And yet I am perſuaded, licentious men have been the readier to contend for a partial inſpiration, on the fancy of its authoriſing them to believe no more than ſuited with their principles and practice. But what hath been ſaid, ſufficiently expoſes the vanity of all ſuch idle contrivances to let men looſe from any part of faith or duty.

[a] ΚΑΤΑ τὴν αὐτῷ ΔΟΘΕΙΣΑΝ σοφίαν 2 Pet. iii. 15.

Admitting,

Admitting, for inſtance, that this or that ſpecific doctrine or precept was not uttered by the immediate influence of the Spirit; but was delivered as the writer received it from his maſter, and conveyed down to poſterity, in the common way of hiſtorians, this takes nothing from that certainty of truth, which attends immediate influence: becauſe the rational idea of a partial inſpiration implies, that the Spirit ſo watched over the authors of the New Teſtament, and guarded their pens, as to admit no mixture of error, even in thoſe parts where they diſcharged the common function of civil relaters. SERM. 6.

I have ſaid, it imports us little to be ſolicitous about the DELIVERY of Scripture-truths: Whether they be conveyed to us only by human means, or by the powerful aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit. Yet let it be obſerved, that this is a very different thing from the TRUTHS THEMSELVES: On this circumſtance, indeed, the reality of revelation depends; the very eſſence of it conſiſting in this, That the doctrines, it teacheth, be not only truths, SIMPLY, but truths REVEALED from God.

But it is otherwiſe in the DELIVERY of theſe truths, by thoſe who received them from the founder of our faith. It is perfectly indifferent to the ends of religion whether they had the aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit, or whether they did it by their own natural capacities, ſo long as we are aſſured the things delivered were conveyed down to us free from error.

Indeed, when the ſacred writers propoſe any thing of faith or practice, explanatory of what

SERM 6. their master delivered, which was not explicitly contained in his teaching, we must needs conclude that so far forth they were under the immediate direction of the Holy Spirit, who was to *teach them all things*. And this influence the Apostle calls *speaking by revelation*[a].

Thus we see, the advantages of PARTIAL INSPIRATION, as here delivered and explained. It answers all the ends of a scripture universally and organically inspired, by producing an UNERRING RULE of faith and manners: and, besides, it obviates all those objections to inspiration, which become insuperable on this high notion of it: such, as trifling errors in circumstances of no importance: For the least error is irreconcileable to organical inspiration; but is very consistent with virtual and cooperating influence: Such again, as the various readings in the several transcripts, and the various styles amongst the several authors of Scripture; inconsistencies which would never have been permitted, and contrarieties which could never have happened under universal inspiration; but are the harmless and natural consequences of the PARTIAL.

In a word, by admitting no more than this lower kind of inspiration (so warmly contended for by those who were in hopes that the admission of it would end in no inspiration at all; and in terms as vague and indeterminate as the scepticism of the users) we secure and establish the infallible truth of Scripture; and free it from all those embarrasing circumstances which have been so art-

[a] 1 Cor. xiv. 6.——ἐὰν μὴ ὑμῖν λαλήσω ἐν ΑΠΟΚΑΛΥΨΕΙ—

fully

fully and disingenuously thrown out to its dis- SERM. credit. 6.

So far then concerning the FIRST branch of the office of the *Holy Ghost*, as it is distinguished in my text, and respects his character of the SPIRIT OF TRUTH, who clears and enlightens the UNDERSTANDING.

II.

I come now to the SECOND, which considers him as the COMFORTER, who rectifies and supports the WILL.

And here again his divine power manifests itself in as miraculous an operation. Sacred antiquity is very large and full in its accounts of the sudden and entire change the Holy Spirit made in the dispositions and manners of those it inlightened; instantaneously effacing all their evil habits, and familiarizing their practice to the performance of every good and virtuous action.

To this illustrious and triumphant Truth, the very enemies and persecutors of our holy faith have been forced to subscribe: not only in the serious accounts which some [b] of them give of the virtue and innocence of PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY; but even in the ironical declamations of others [c] concerning the boasted virtue of water baptism; which was then generally accompanied with, and sometimes preceded by these extraordinary effusions of grace from the COMFORTER. "Come

[b] Pliny, Suetonius, Tacitus, etc.
[c] Celsus, Julian, etc.

SERM. 6. here (ſay theſe unhappy ſcorners) and ſee the amazing efficacy of Chriſtian baptiſm! Whoever is immerged in this water, tho' he were before an adulterer, a practiſed thief or murderer, riſes waſhed and purified from all his crimes, and on the inſtant commences a life of temperance, of juſtice, and of charity." Thus did theſe impious wits endeavour to diſguiſe their chagrin at the triumphs of the Spirit, over vice and Paganiſm, by a ſarcaſtic parody of the grateful exultations of the Chriſtian paſtors. In truth, it was all they had to ſay; for, after this, they were reduced to ſeek an imaginary conſolation in the poſſibility that ſome NATURAL CAUSES had produced ſo extraordinary a phænomenon.

It may be worth while therefore to enquire whether any ſuch cauſes can be reaſonably preſumed.

The enemies of our faith hope to find them in SUPERSTITION and FANATICISM; the two paſſions which the ſtrong impreſſion of a new Religion begets by its HOPES and FEARS upon the minds of men.

Let us ſee whether either, or both of theſe, will account for ſo ſudden and laſting a converſion, from vice and corruption, to a life of ſanctity and virtue.

SUPERSTITION, which only depraves the Reaſon, without making any impreſſion on thoſe faculties of the mind that moſt incline the Will to a new bias, never effects any conſiderable change in the MANNERS. Its utmoſt force is to perſuade us, that an exact attention to the manual offices of religion will be able to guard us from the

the evils denounced againſt vice and immorality; or, at leaſt, that ſome tranſient acts of penitence, as death approaches, will be ſufficient to ſecure to us the rewards of purity and virtue. SERM. 6.

FANATICISM, indeed, ſhakes and agitates the mind with greater violence: and by inſtigating thoſe faculties, which moſt influence the Will, frequently forces the manners from their bent, and ſometimes effaces or obſcures the very ſtrongeſt impreſſions of cuſtom and nature. But this extraordinary fervour, as it is always violent, is rarely laſting: never ſo long as to fix the new ſyſtem of action into an habit. So that when its rage abates, as it ſoon does, but when it drives the unhappy victim into downright madneſs, that new bias on the Will keeps relaxing, till all the former habitudes recover their accuſtomed tone.

This is confirmed by the general hiſtory of Fanaticiſm: where we always ſee the final iſſue of a ſudden converſion to be, either a return to an open profligacy of manners; or a deep hypocritical diſſimulation of them.

But now, if we look into the character of thoſe early converts, we ſhall find, that their virtue, from the very firſt impreſſion, had all the eaſe, ſobriety, and moderation of a ſettled habit; in this they perſevered; and, adding grace to grace, went on thro' life, in one conſtant tenor, from the firſt baptiſmal profeſſion of their faith by water, to the laſt awful confirmation of it in their blood. A dreadful period! when Nature, by the very ſhock, and in the ſtruggle it then ſuffers, becomes enabled to ſhake off all the

SERM. 6. fumes of MENTAL, as, on other occaſions, of *corporeal*, intoxication.

Nor could this ſudden converſion be the effect of a MERE rational conviction. We know it to be morally impoſſible for reaſon, to root out, on the inſtant, the inveterate habitudes of vice. All that this faculty can do, is, by conſtantly applying her dictates, and inforcing her concluſions, to win over the Will; till the mind, by little and little, accuſtoms itſelf to receive another ſet of ideas, productive of other practices and habits. A work of time, and labour: as thoſe good men have ſufficiently experienced, who, on a mere rational conviction of their errors, have worked out a reformation in their lives and manners. When, therefore, we ſee the ſtrongeſt impreſſions of evil cuſtom, and the blackeſt ſtains of corrupted nature thus ſuddenly waſhed out, to what muſt we aſcribe ſo amazing a reform but to the powerful operation of GRACE?

But it may be objected, "There are inſtances, where a fanatic turn of mind alone hath kept men in the practice of that virtue which it firſt recommended." I reply, That doubtleſs, there have been many good people, who either thro' the weakneſs of their reaſon, or the ſtrength of their paſſions, have been hurried into fanatic fervours, which have ſupported and confirmed them in their previous innocence of manners. But even in this caſe, they are ſufficient marks to diſtinguiſh ſuch of the firſt Chriſtian Confeſſors, who were in that happy circumſtance of being found innocent, rather than forced, by the Holy Spirit into the practice of virtue, ſufficient, I ſay, to

to diſtinguiſh them from theſe better ſort of Fa-SERM. 6.
natics. The office of the Holy Spirit was two-fold; not only to rectify the Will, but to enlighten the underſtanding. Now that divine ſplendor which conducted the firſt Chriſtians into *all truth*, ſufficiently diſcloſed the Guide which led them into *all righteouſneſs*. But we ſee none of that *ſhining light* amidſt the *good works* [a] of innocent enthuſiaſts. On the contrary, we find a more than ordinary ignorance; and ſometimes even an incapacity for rational conviction.

THUS was the firſt part of the promiſe of Jeſus performed in the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt, the SPIRIT OF TRUTH and the COMFORTER, to INSTRUCT and to REFORM the world.

III.

The other, that HE SHOULD ABIDE WITH US FOR EVER, comes next to be conſidered. We have obſerved how this likewiſe was fulfilled, and in a very ſublime ſenſe, by the ſure depoſite of the *fruits of the Spirit* in ſacred Scripture. But we are not to ſuppoſe this to be the whole of the completion. His preſent as well as paſt influence, is the ſubject of the promiſe; and therefore we muſt conclude he *abides with the church for ever*, as well in his PERSON as in his WORKS.

The only queſtion is, whether, from the primitive ages to theſe later times, the virtue of his preſence continued to operate with the ſame vigour, as *Inlightener* and *Comforter*, and the ſame

[a] Matth. v. 16.

SERM. 6. visible marks of the divinity, with which it first set out, in his descent upon the Apostles.

And this, as it tends to the decision of more than one important question, not only the superstitious claim of CHURCH-MIRACLES[e], but the fanatic pretences to DIVINE ILLUMINATION, it will be proper to consider more at large.

But here I shall venture to reverse the method of those Divines, who, in their inquiries concerning God's dispensations, endeavour to prove the facts they preconceive, from the fitness they pretend to have discovered: that is, having pronounced of what is fit for God to do; on the credit of that fitness, they maintain that he hath done it. On the contrary, I hold it more rational as well as modest, first to inquire of Scripture, what God hath done; and when that is known, it will be then time enough to explain the fitness of his doings.

Let us see, therefore, what Scripture hath delivered concerning the duration of these extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit: which, whether they rested in the recipient, and manifested themselves in grace and knowledge transcending the powers of humanity; or whether they extended outwards, in the *gifts of healing* to the relief of their brethren's infirmities; may with equal propriety be called and accounted MIRACLES.

[e] The powers of *healing* and *working miracles*, as we see above, are reckoned by the Apostle amongst the gifts of the Holy Spirit. For, as was observed before, those who were first endowed with them, are to be considered in two capacities, as the workers of a miracle, and as the persons on whom a miracle was performed.

Now

Now St. Paul, I preſume, hath determined this queſtion for us, in the paſſage quoted above, where he recapitulates the various prerogatives of the apoſtolic age. This deciſive paſſage is where he tells the Corinthians, that *Charity never faileth: but whether there be* PROPHECIES, *they ſhall fail*; *whether there be* TONGUES, *they ſhall ceaſe*; *whether there be* KNOWLEDGE, *it ſhall vaniſh away* [f]. SERM. 6.

It was the Apoſtle's purpoſe, in this chapter, to exalt CHARITY above all the other Chriſtian graces: and therefore having, in the preceding verſes, ſhewn its ſuperiority to the reſt, from its QUALITIES and ATTRIBUTES; he proceeds to urge the advantage ſtill further, from the conſideration of its DURABILITY. *Charity never faileth.*

The queſtion is, Whether the ſuperior duration, here aſcribed to *Charity* over *Prophecies*, *Tongues*, and *Knowledge*, reſpects only the progreſs of the Goſpel here; or whether it extends to the completion of it, in its triumphant ſtate, hereafter? The common opinion, I believe, is that it refers to another life; ſupported, as ſhould ſeem, by the Apoſtle's inforcing his argument for this durability on the obſervation, that, *now we ſee thro' a glaſs darkly*; *but then face to face: now we know in part*; *but then ſhall we know even as we are known* [g], ideas plainly relative to a future ſtate.

But the other ſenſe appears to be the true; and gives us the Apoſtle's meaning to this effect: "The virtue of *Charity* is to accompany the

[f] 1 Cor. xiii. 8. [g] 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

Chriſtian

SERM. 6. Chriſtian church here throughout all its ſtages; whereas the gift of *prophecy*, the ſpeaking ſtrange *tongues*, and the ſupernatural *knowledge* of the myſteries of God, are only temporary endowments, beſtowed upon the church during its infant-ſtate, to protect and ſupport it againſt the deluſions and powers of Darkneſs."

As the words conſidered in this ſenſe, convey a very important doctrine, and, perhaps the only expreſs declaration Scripture hath thought fit to make of the ceſſation of the miraculous operations of the Holy Spirit after the eſtabliſhment of the Faith, I ſhall endeavour to ſupport my interpretation by conſiderations drawn from its coherence with what proceeds and follows, in the courſe of the Apoſtle's argument.

The Church of Corinth, tho' abundantly inriched with all divine graces, would not yet ſuffer the Holy Ghoſt to do *his perfect work*, in the enlargement of the heart by univerſal benevolence; but elated with ſpiritual pride (whoſe property it is, not to bear with thoſe who differ from us, and to deſpiſe thoſe who are beneath us in religious attainments) ſplit and divided themſelves into oppoſite ſects and factions: And this unhappy ſituation not only rendering all their endowments vain and fruitleſs, but reflecting diſhonour on the *Giver of all good things*, the Apoſtle addreſſes himſelf to expoſe it with his utmoſt vigour. He proves the ſuperior excellence of *Charity*, both in QUALITY and DURATION, above all other ſpiritual acquirements whatſoever.

The

SERM. 6.

The first three verses of his argument declare, that, without *Charity*, the other graces have neither use nor ornament: the next four verses specify its superior qualities: and the remaining six (of which the words in question are the first) consider it under the single advantage of its duration, when all those other graces, of which they were so foolishly proud, should be withdrawn. *Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.* In the next verse he gives the Reason: *For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.* As much as to say: "When that CHRISTIAN LIFE marked out by the Gospel, and perfected by CHARITY, shall have arrived to full vigour and maturity, then those temporary aids of the Holy Spirit, such as *tongues*, *prophecy*, and *knowledge*, bestowed with a purpose to remove the prejudices of those without, and to support the weakness of those within, and imperfect too in proportion to the defects of the recipients, shall, like the scaffolding of a finished palace, be taken down and removed."

And to shew that their loss will be no longer regretted, when the Church hath advanced from a state of infancy to manhood in the steddy exercise of the CHRISTIAN LIFE, he illustrates his position by this elegant similitude; *When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.*

But

SERM. 6.

But having repreſented thoſe extraordinary gifts as greatly imperfect, he thought fit to add, that this defect did not proceed from any penurious communication of the Holy Spirit, but from the narrowneſs of the Recipient; the ſoul, now inveloped in a priſon of fleſh, not being able to get more than an oblique glimpſe of the Sovereign Good; but that when we have ſhaken off this mortal incumbrance, and regained the regions of light, we ſhall then intuitively comprehend the whole œconomy both of Nature and of Grace. *For now* (ſays the Apoſtle) *we ſee through a glaſs darkly, but then face to face: now I know in part; but then ſhall I know even as alſo I am known.* And this reaſoning, which evidently reſpected a future ſtate, led men to underſtand the Apoſtle as placing that ſuperior duration of *Charity*, which is the ſubject of the argument, in another life. But they ſeem to have miſtaken the drift of this obſervation, which was not a direct inforcement of the argument in the eighth verſe; but an occaſional anſwer to an objection, which naturally aroſe from the management of one of the topics in the eleventh. And yet the Apoſtle's concluding obſervation was ſufficient to have ſet them right —*And now abideth Faith, Hope, and Charity, theſe three; but the greateſt of theſe is Charity* [h]. Which is to this effect: "You may now, perhaps, object, that this quality of ſuperior duration is not peculiar to *Charity*, but belongs equally to the other Chriſtian graces of *Faith* and *Hope*, which travel thro' with it, and continue to ſupport and adorn the Church of

[h] Ver. 13.

God,

God, in all its revolutions; ſo that, with regards to duration, *Faith* and *Hope* ſhare with *Charity* in this advantage, over the other tranſient endowments of the Spirit. I agree, replies the Apoſtle, thus far to the objection, that they are all three joint ſharers in this advantage, but ſtill THE GREATEST OF THE THREE IS CHARITY; for as I have obſerved in the beginning of the argument—*Tho' I have all faith ſo that I could remove mountains, and tho' I give my body to be burned, and have no Charity, it profiteth me nothing:* the reaſon follows; it is on account of its ſuperior qualities: *Charity ſuffereth long and is kind, etc.* it hath qualities which *Faith* and *Hope* have not, beſides, thoſe which *Faith* and *Hope* have, even ſuch as are moſt eſſential to them. *For Charity* BELIEVETH *all things, it* HOPETH *all things.*" SERM. 6.

But now ſuppoſe, the argument, for the ſuperior duration of *Charity*, to refer to another life, How could it be ſaid, that *faith* and *hope* have the privilege of *remaining*, or having an equal *abiding* with *Charity*, When both *faith* and *hope* will be ſwallowed up in fruition?

From all this it appears, that the MIRACULOUS POWERS OF THE CHURCH were to ceaſe on its eſtabliſhment: as well thoſe which relieved our corporeal, as thoſe which adminiſtred aid to our ſpiritual diſtreſſes: and, conſequently, that SUPERSTITION and FANATICISM equally labour under the wound here inflicted on them, by the hand of the Apoſtle.

It expoſes all the ſuperſtitious and fanatical pretences of the church of Rome to ſupernatural powers;

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powers; not only in the gift of INFALLIBILITY, whereby it pretends to comprehend *all myſteries and all knowledge*, and in the work of TRANSUBSTANTIATION, by a *faith which does not remove*, but make *mountains*, but alſo in the LEGENDARY MIRACLES of their ſaints. In which pretences, to obſerve it by the way, the blunder ſeems to be as glaring as the impoſture. St. Paul reckons the ſtate of CHRISTIAN PERFECTION not to be that of MIRACLES but of CHARITY. *For we know in part* (ſays he) *and we propheſy in part: but when that which is perfect is come, than that which is in part ſhall be done away.* What is that *perfect* ſtate? The ſtate of *Charity*: ſo that when that is come, the imperfect ſtate of *miracles* was to ceaſe. Now in the Church of Rome, SAINTSHIP, which is their *ſtate of perfection*, abounds in *miracles*, but is very defective in *Charity*: Of which, there needs no better proof than this, That one of their greateſt *ſaints*, and fulleſt of *miracles*, was the founder of the INQUISITION: Indeed, if the Apoſtle's reaſoning would bear this inference, that *miracles* ſhould remain till *Charity* had done its *perfect work*, I do not know any Church that has a better claim to the continued exerciſe of miraculous powers than the Church of Rome. But what need ſoever it may have of them, it bungles ſo wretchedly in their exhibition, that we may well regard them as in the loweſt rank of thoſe *childiſh things*, which, the Apoſtle ſays, both men and churches ſhould be aſhamed of, and put away, when they come to years of diſcretion.

Having

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Having now eſtabliſhed the FACT, we may reaſonably and ſafely inquire into its FITNESS. There ſeems to have been two cauſes for the extraordinary operation of the Holy Spirit. The manifeſtation of his power; and the inſtruction and ſupport of his church.

To the firſt, we have obſerved, that, in propagating our holy faith, it was as fit that the *Sanctifier*, as that the *Redeemer*, ſhould ſupport his miſſion by miracles. But the ſame conſiderations, which ſhew this fitneſs to be now ceaſed in the one caſe, ſhew it likewiſe, in the other. For the DIVINITY of our faith be-ing once eſtabliſhed, it ſupports itſelf ever after on the ſame credibility of human teſtimony, which all other truths do, that are founded in facts.

To the ſecond point, His inſtruction and ſupport of the Church, We obſerve, that, on his firſt deſcent upon the Apoſtles, he found their minds rude, uninformed, and utter ſtrangers to all ſpiritual knowledge; prejudiced in favour of a *carnal Law*, and altogether averſe to the dictates of the *everlaſting Goſpel*. Theſe he illuminated; and, by degrees, led into all the truths neceſſary for the profeſſors of the Faith to know, or for the propagators of it to teach. For a *rule of faith* not being yet compoſed, ſome extraordinary effuſion of his virtue was ſtill neceſſary, both to regulate the faith of him who received it, and to conſtitute the authority of him who was to communicate, of what he had received, to others. But when now the *rule of faith* was perfected in a collection of the apoſtolic writings, part of this office of the Holy Spirit was transferred upon

SERM. 6. on the Sacred Canon; and his enlightening grace could not be expected in such abundant measure as would make the recipients infallible guides to others, but only competently skilful in the direction of themselves.

This account of the change of œconomy, in the dispensations of the Holy Spirit, is sufficient to discredit the false confidence of modern FANATICS, who pretend to as high a degree of divine communication as if no other *rule of faith* were in being; and are not content to submit themselves to these pretended impressions, but will needs set up for lights of the church, and directors of their Brethren. They do not seem to consider, that the principle, which supposes holy Scripture to be so obscure as to need the extraordinary assistance of the Holy Spirit to explain it, and so imperfect as to need a new inspiration to supply it, is a mere Popish doctrine, highly injurious to the integrity of the written Word.— But they read the history of the spiritual dispensations of old times; they look with wonder on the privileges and powers attached to those chosen vessels; their imaginations grow heated; they forget the difference between the present system of things and the past; they seem to feel the impressions they see recorded; and they assume the airs, and mimic the authority of Prophets and Apostles.

Again, The nature and genius of the Gospel was so averse to all the religious institutions of the world, that human prejudices, on its first publication, were set in direct opposition to it: and of all prejudices, those of religion are known to

to be moſt violent and obſtinate. To overcome theſe, nothing leſs than the power of the HOLY ONE was ſufficient. HE did the work of man's converſion, and reconciled an unbelieving world to God. At preſent the popular prejudice lies the other way. So much then of his taſk was finiſhed; and the Faith, from thenceforth, had a favourable hearing. Indeed were we to take our ideas of things from the repreſentations of modern Fanatics, we ſhould be tempted ſtill to think ourſelves in a land of Pagans, with all their prejudices full blown upon them. Hence it is that in the accounts they give us of their miſſions, the *name of Jeſus is preached up* in this place; and the *glad tidings of the Goſpel* convey'd to that: a *new light ſprings up* in a land of darkneſs; and *life and immortality* is now firſt offered to thoſe who *ſit in the ſhadow of death.* SERM. 6.

A further reaſon for the abatement of the influences of the ſupporting ſpirit of Grace is the peace and ſecurity of the Church. There was a time when the Powers of this world were combined together for its deſtruction. At ſuch a juncture nothing but an extraordinary aid from above could enable humanity to ſuſtain ſo great a conflict as that the holy martyrs encountered with joy and rapture, the terrors of death in torment. But now the profeſſion of the Faith is attended with eaſe and honour; and the conviction, which human teſtimony affords us of its truth, is ſufficient to fortify us in our religious perſeverance.

But the continued claim to this primitive abundance of the Spirit, by Fanatics of all times,

SERM. 6. may make it expedient to examine their pretenſions yet more minutely. And Scripture itſelf exhorts us to this inquiry where it bids us to TRY THE SPIRITS; and, in another place, directs us how this trial ſhould be made. *Beloved, believe not every ſpirit* (ſays St. John) *but try the ſpirits whether they be of God; becauſe many falſe prophets are gone out into the world*[a]. At the time this precept was given, there was a more than ordinary attention required to guard againſt the deluſions of falſe prophets: for the abundant effuſion of the Holy Spirit on the riſing Religion, gave encouragement to impoſtors, and a handle to enthuſiaſts to counterfeit all that was equivocal in its operations.

Hence we find, that amongſt the various endowments of the Church, ſome of which were to convict gainſayers, and others to edify believers, there was one of the latter kind of ſpecial uſe to ſupport the dignity, and to diſtinguiſh the divine original of all the reſt. And this, we have ſeen, the Apoſtle calls, the DISCERNING OF SPIRITS: a virtue which, like the touch of Ithuriel's ſpear in the poet, laid bare the deformity of Impoſture. With this, Peter detected Simon the Magician; and Paul confounded Elymas the Sorcerer.

But when the thing itſelf had ceaſed, the pretence to inſpiration, for ſome wiſe ends of Providence to us unknown, ſtill continued to infeſt the Church with its wretched mimicries; while that virtue which was to detect them, *the diſ-*

[a] 1 John iv. 6.

cerning

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cerning of ſpirits, was withdrawn, with the reſt of the inſpired graces. And yet the command to *try the ſpirits whether they were of God*, was ſtill our Duty. But to *try* without the faculty of *diſcerning* would be, at beſt, an impertinent employment.

From this embarras we are delivered by the gracious providence of the Holy Spirit: who provided, that Thoſe whom he had endowed with the gift of *diſcerning of ſpirits*, ſhould leave behind them ſome rules, whereby the men and churches of all ages might be enabled to *try the ſpirits*; and ſo, defend themſelves from the ſeduction of error and impoſture: *becauſe*, ſays the command, *many falſe prophets are gone out into the world*.

If theſe *falſe prophets* pretend to a character *foretold*, then we are bid to *ſearch the Scriptures* [b], to ſee if they *teſtify* of ſuch a character. And the Bereans are eſteemed *more noble* than their neighbours for this very point of wiſdom, that they *ſearched the Scriptures daily to find whether thoſe things were ſo* [c].

But if theſe *falſe prophets* pretend only to ſome extraordinary meaſure of the ſpirit, then we are directed to *try* that *ſpirit*, by applying to it the following characters of real inſpiration. *The wiſdom that is from above is firſt pure, then peaceable, gentle and eaſy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocriſy* [d].

[b] John v. 39. *Search the Scriptures——for they teſtify of me.* [c] Acts xvii. 11. [d] James iii. 17.

SERM. 6. It is worthy obſervation, that, in this rule or direction for the *trial of ſpirits*, the marks of real inſpiration are to be applied only NEGATIVELY. That is, we may ſafely pronounce, that the man, in whom they are not found, hath not the Spirit of God, or *the wiſdom which is from above*: while, on the contrary, we are not to conclude that He, in whom they are found, is, from this circumſtance alone, endowed with any extraordinary effluence of the Spirit; becauſe they may be no other than thoſe ordinary advantages which ariſe from the diſcovery of God's Will contained in ſacred Scripture. So that altho' ſuch a one may be truly ſaid to be poſſeſſed of *the wiſdom which is from above*, it is not that which comes by way of inſpiration, the point here in queſtion. Thus, we ſee, the Apoſtle's rule carries with it, in its very nature, the evidence of its divine original: the aſſiſtance wanted in the trial of ſpirits, ſince the ceaſing of the extraordinary powers, being ſuch a ſet of marks as was rather fitted to detect impoſtors, than to aſſure the truth of a character not now to be expected.

By theſe rules, therefore, as delivered by St. James, I propoſe to TRY, as we are directed by St. John, THE SPIRITS of our modern pretenders to inſpiration.

The ſubject, here predicated of, is WISDOM *from above*, that is, REVEALED KNOWLEDGE, and, as deſcending to man, adapted to the capacity of human Powers: ſo that it is of the eſſence of this *wiſdom* TO BE UNDERSTOOD, or, in other words, to be COMMUNICABLE. When therefore

therefore we find a Pretender to inſpiration, ſuch for inſtance as Jacob Behmen, delivering to us, under this character, a heap of unmeaning, or, what amounts to the ſame, unintelligible words, I can conceive no other of it than of jargon, or the *ſpirit* of infatuation. Nor will the apology of his ingenious diſciple, who compares him to St. Paul, *caught up into the third heaven, and hearing and ſeeing things impoſſible to be uttered by human words*[a], at all reconcile me to his pretenſions. For here lies the difference between Jacob and Paul; The firſt talks largely of what he knew his reader could not underſtand; the ſecond, as maſter of himſelf tho' not of his ſubject, more ſagely obſerves a reverent ſilence. SERM. 6.

This *wiſdom*, ſays St. James, *is firſt* PURE. This, the examiner is to conſider as a previous mark for the direction of his judgment. He is firſt to enquire whether there be any thing delivered in the doctrine, or indulged in the practice, of theſe pretenders to a gifted miſſion, which either contradicts our natural notions of God, or our ideas of human duty. If there be any ſuch, we need go no further, but may ſafely reject the whole of his pretences; relying on this, that as God hath revealed to us, by natural light, the knowledge of himſelf, ſo far forth as is neceſſary for the diſcharge of our duty, all after-pretences to Revelation, which contradict this knowledge, muſt

[a] "When he, like Elijah, in his fiery chariot is caught up into "ſuch heights, and ſees and relates ſuch things as I cannot yet "comprehend, I love and reverence him for being where I never "was; and ſeeing ſuch things as he cannot make me to ſee; juſt "as I love and reverence St. Paul," &c. Mr. Law's book, called, *The way to divine knowledge*, p. 88.

SERM. 6. needs be falſe, becauſe one of God's revelations cannot contradict another; and becauſe we cannot have a ſtronger evidence of the truth of any external, than we have of this internal revelation.

Now if we try the moſt aſſuming of our modern pretenders by this teſt, we ſhall have cauſe to drop them at the entrance. The ſpiritual Behmeniſt, abovementioned, ſeems to have ſo little of that *purity* of *wiſdom which comes from above*, that he hath endeavoured, in a large diſcourſe, to recommend the impure doctrine of the Chineſe Virtuoſi, and of that Atheiſtical Carteſian, Spinoſa, which teaches one only ſubſtance in all Being, of which the Creature and Creator participate in common [b].

Next

[b] "It is the ſame impoſſibility for a thing to be created *out of* "nothing, as to be created *by* nothing. It is no more a part or "prerogative of God's omnipotence to create a Being out of no-"thing, than to make a thing to be without any one quality of "being in it.—Every creature is nothing elſe than NATURE put "into a certain form of exiſtence." *An appeal to all that doubt or diſbelieve the truths of the Goſpel*, by W. Law, M. A. 1742. p. 8.

"That which thinks and wills in the ſoul, is that *very ſame* un-"beginning breath which thought and willed in God, before it "was breathed into the form of a human ſoul; and therefore it is, "that Will and thought cannot be bounded.—The eſſences of the "ſoul were a breath in God before they became a living ſoul, they "lived in God before they lived in the created ſoul, and therefore "the ſoul is a partaker of the eternity of God, and can never ceaſe "to be." P. 10.

"The creation of a ſoul is the bringing the powers of thinking "and willing out of their eternal ſtate in the one God into a be-"ginning ſtate of ſelf conſcious life, diſtinct from God. And this "is God's omnipotent creating ability, that he can make the pow-"ers of his own nature become creatural, living perſonal images "of what he is in himſelf, in a ſtate of DISTINCT PERSONALITY "from him." P. 12.

"It is no more a property of the divine omnipotence to be able "to annihilate a ſoul, than to be able to make an eternal truth be-

come

Next to this impurity of modern *wiſdom*, which ſcandalizes NATURE, is that other doctrine, which diſhonours GRACE. " It is a point WE " CHIEFLY INSIST UPON (ſays one of the foun- " ders of METHODISM) that orthodoxy or " RIGHT OPINION is, at beſt, but a very ſlen- " der part of religion, IF ANY PART OF IT " AT ALL." Here we have REASON quite diſcarded; SERM. 6.

" come a fiction of yeſterday. And to think it a leſſening of the " power of God to ſay that he cannot annihilate the ſoul, is as ab- " ſurd as to ſay, that it is a leſſening of the light of the Sun if it " cannot deſtroy or darken its own rays of light." P. 17.

" To ſuppoſe this or any other MATERIAL world to be made " out of nothing, has all the ſame abſurdities in it as the ſuppoſing " angels and ſpirits to be created out of nothing. All the qualities " of all beings are eternal.—All qualities, properties, or whatever " can be affirmed of God, are ſelf-exiſtent and neceſſarily-exiſtent. " Self and neceſſary exiſtence, is not a particular attribute of God, " but is the general nature of every thing that can be affirmed of " God. All qualities and properties are ſelf-exiſtent in God.—It " follows undeniably that EVERY CREATED THING muſt have its " whole nature from and out of the divine nature." P. 23, 24.

" Properly and ſtrictly ſpeaking nothing CAN BEGIN to be. The " beginning of every thing is nothing more than its beginning to " be in a *new ſtate*.—No quality or power of nature then began to " be; but ſuch qualities and powers as had been from all eternity " began then to be in a *new ſtate*. Aſk what fire, light, darkneſs, " air, water, and earth are; They are and can be nothing elſe " but ſome ETERNAL THINGS become groſs, finite, meaſurable, " diviſible, and tranſitory? For if there could be a temporal fire " that did not ſpring out of eternal fire, then there might be time " that did not come out of eternity." P. 114, 115.

" Will any one now call theſe things *whimſical ſpeculations*. Can " any thing be thought of more WORTHY of God, more CON- " FORMABLE to Nature, or more CONSONANT to all revealed Re- " ligion." P. 118.

[c] Mr. Weſly's *Plain Account*, etc. p. 4.—If this be the caſe, the firſt Reformers of Religion, from the errors of Popery, have much to anſwer for; Who, for the ſake of *right opinion, at beſt a ſlender part of religion, if any part of it at all*, occaſioned ſo much turmoil, and ſo many revolutions in civil as well as in religious ſyſtems. Without doubt Mr. Weſley, by this doctrine, provides well for the fortune of his Sect, amongſt all denominations of Chriſtianity:

SERM. 6. diſcarded; or, at beſt, ſeparated from RELIGION. For when Reaſon is no longer employed to diſtinguiſh *right* from *wrong opinions*, Religion hath no further connection with it. And what occaſion for that employment, when the diſtinction is of ſo little conſequence? But now, once agree to ſeparate Reaſon from Religion, and piety degenerates either into nonſenſe or madneſs; and, for the fruits of Grace, all that remains is the froth and dreggs of enthuſiaſm and ſuperſtition. In the firſt ages of Chriſtianity, the glory of the Goſpel conſiſted in its being a *reaſonable ſervice*. By this it was diſtinguiſhed from the ſeveral modes of gentile Religion, the eſſence of which conſiſted in fanatic raptures and ſuperſtitious ceremonies; without any articles of belief or formula of faith: *right opinion being*, on the principles of the Pagan prieſthood, *at beſt, but a very ſlender part of Religion, if any part of it at*

But I do not ſee what obligations the Church of England hath unto him for thus ſhortening the labours of the Popiſh Miſſionaries. However, to do him juſtice, I believe he hath as little regard to the intereſts of Popery as any body elſe, and as much to his own. This declaration I ſuſpect was forced from him as the beſt means of ſecuring the honour of his pretenſions. He could not but ſee (what the learned Writer of *The Enthuſiaſm of Methodiſts and Papiſts compar'd* hath proved at large) that there is an exact reſemblance, in the NEW BIRTH, between his Saints and the Saints of the Church of Rome. This would lead men to conclude that their Author and original was the ſame. Yet as their opinions are totally oppoſite, that Author could never be the God of truth. What remained, but to aſcribe both, to *enthuſiaſm* or *demoniaſm?* To avoid this diſgrace, Mr. Weſley, rather chuſes to let Popery ſhare with him in the glory of *inſpiration*; and this could be only done by making it believed that Religious errors have ſo little to do with Religion, that they can be no bar or impediment to the higheſt favours of the Holy Spirit. "It is a point (ſays he) we chiefly inſiſt upon, that Ortho-"doxy or right opinion is, at beſt, but a very ſlender part of Re-"ligion, if any part of it at all."

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all. But Chriſtianity, aroſe on different principles: St. Paul conſiders *right opinion* as one full third part of Religion, where ſpeaking of the three great fundamental principles on which the Chriſtian Church is erected, he makes *truth* to be one of them. The *fruit of the Spirit*, ſays he, *is in all* GOODNESS *and* RIGHTEOUSNESS *and* TRUTH [d]. For [e] *goodneſs* regards the conduct of particulars to the whole, and conſiſts in the exemplary habits of all ſocial virtues; and this refers to Chriſtian PRACTICE. [f] *Righteouſneſs* regards the conduct of the whole to particulars, and conſiſts in that equitable gentleneſs of government where church authority is made ſubſervient to the private rights of conſcience; and this refers to Chriſtian DISCIPLINE. Laſtly, [g] *Truth* regards particulars and the whole mutually, and conſiſts in *Orthodoxy* and *right opinion*; and this refers to Chriſtian DOCTRINE. So different an idea had St. Paul of Chriſtianity from what this zealous man hath entertained of it; who compriſes all in the *new-birth*, and, to croſs the Proverb, makes *feeling* only *to be believing*. On the whole, therefore, we conclude, That that *wiſdom* which diveſts Chriſtianity of Truth and Reaſon, and reſolves its eſſence rather into mental and ſpiritual ſenſations, than tries it by moral demonſtration, can never be the *wiſdom which is from above*, whoſe firſt characteriſtic attribute is *purity*.

If theſe men ſo greatly derogate from God's ineffable nature, there are others who equally diſhonour, and pollute our notions of his attri-

[d] Eph. v. 9. [e] Ἀγαθωσύνη. [f] Δικαιοσύνη. [g] Ἀλήθεια.

butes.

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butes. For while ſome of them extend *free election* to abſolute Predeſtination [i]; and others degrade *ſaving faith* to immoral Antinomianiſm [k]; they both concur to abuſe the *diſpenſation of grace* by depreciating and even reprobating mere MORAL VIRTUES, which they reckon but as a ſtate of ſplendid vice, ungrateful and even odious to our Maker.

Thus, on a fair trial, theſe illuminated Doctors, at their very firſt entrance, have excluded themſelves from their high pretenſions: principles like theſe, if not coming from, yet directly leading into, the very ſink of *impurity* itſelf.

But now ſhould it be our fortune in this examination to find the matter otherwiſe; and that the *wiſdom* pretended to be *from above* is indeed *pure*, and conſequently worthy that original; our buſineſs will then be to proceed with the enquiry, and apply the following marks to their pretenſions.

The firſt of which is that it be *peaceable*.—*then peaceable*, ſays the Apoſtle. A leading quality in the general character of celeſtial *wiſdom*. A choir of angels uſhered in the advent of the Son of God, with *peace, good will towards men* [l]; And He himſelf, on his departure from us, bequeathed it as his laſt legacy to his Diſciples, *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you* [m]. Now this which the Father proclaimed, which the Son beſtowed, muſt needs be the office of the Holy Ghoſt to maintain. Whatever *form of godlineſs*, therefore, hath not this eſſential mark,

[i] Whitfield.
[k] The Moravians.
[l] Luke ii. 14.
[m] John xiv. 27.

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can never reaſonably be deemed of heavenly ori- SERM. 6.
ginal.

Much to be ſuſpected then is the *wiſdom* of our modern Saints of every denomination, who affect to diſcharge their pretended miniſtry in ſuch a manner as muſt neceſſarily violate the peace of that eſtabliſhed Church which they profeſs to ſupport or reform. For what greater violation of peace than a ſchiſmatical diviſion? what higher provocation to reſentment, than a ſeparation which implies a charge of moral or ſpiritual unworthineſs, in the body left? And yet that *peaceable wiſdom which is from above*, ſeems to aſſure us, that no pretence of ſuperior purity or holineſs, nor perhaps any thing but tyranny over conſcience can ſufficiently juſtify particulars in ſeparating from a religious community in which they acknowledge all the eſſentials of the Chriſtian faith, as delivered in Scripture, to be publicly held and profeſſed.

The ſetting at nought the eſtabliſhed Diſcipline, by invading the province of the lawful preachers, by aſſembling at unfit times, and in undue places, is another violation of peace. The *ſpeaking evil of Dignities*, ſcurrilous invectives againſt the Governors and Paſtors of the eſtabliſhed Church, is yet another and more enormous violation of this peace. For, Inſolencies of this nature provoke warm and ill-inſtructed men to demand juſtice on the offenders; which, not being always at hand, as the intereſts of ſociety will not always permit the magiſtrate to inforce it, Particulars are apt to attempt that, in a ſcandalous tumultuary manner, which all the wiſdom of Government, all the

SERM. 6 the authority and reverence of Laws, are but barely ſufficient to adjuſt with ſuch diſcretion, as while the dignity of the State is vindicated, the liberty of Religion be not infringed.

In juſtification of theſe diſorders, our Enthuſiaſts are ever ready to reply, That the violation of *peace towards men* advances the *peace of God*, that peace, which *paſſeth all underſtanding*; our bleſſed Maſter having declared, that he *was not come to ſend peace upon earth, but a ſword*[a]. Here the ſame fanatic ſpirit, that makes them apply to themſelves all thoſe declarations which concern the firſt extraordinary ſtate of the Goſpel, hinders them from ſeeing, that the words of Jeſus reſpect only the accidental and tranſient ſtruggle of the then expiring powers of darkneſs; but that the heavenly proclamation of PEACE, denounces the genuine and conſtant fruits of *God's good will to mankind:* that the one only predicted the early fortunes of a ſuffering Church; the other deſcribed the eternal nature and genius of a triumphant Religion. But hurried on by the rapid fervors of fanaticiſm, they loſe ſight of a chriſtian Country and a believing Magiſtracy, and are carried into a land of Pagans and Idolaters, with the rulers of this world riſen up to oppoſe and perſecute the *word of life:* And under theſe deluſions, it is no wonder they ſhould deſpiſe order, inſult Government, and provoke and even dare the Magiſtrate's reſentment.

And yet even this face of fanaticiſm, bad as it is when ſet againſt authority, is the very beſt it has. We ſee it at preſent under a powerful, well-

[a] Matth. x. 34.

eſtabliſhed,

eſtabliſhed, watchful Government, where it is obliged to wear a leſs audacious look. To know its true character and proper diſpoſitions, we ſhould ſee it in all its fortunes. To give an inſtance of what I ſay. That which at preſent goes under the name of METHODISM was, in the times of our fore-fathers, called PURITANISM, In its firſt appearance, it occaſionally put on the ſame meek exterior, which we ſee it wear at preſent. During the firm adminiſtration of Elizabeth it diſguiſed, and but barely diſguiſed, its native ferocity, in a forced and feigned ſubmiſſion. But in the weak and diſtracted times of Charles the firſt, it ventured to throw off the mask, and under the new name of INDEPENDENCY, became the chief inſtrument of all the dreadful diſorders which terminated that unhappy reign. For *Independency* was a name as well ſuited to the weakneſs of that Government it defied and overturned, as *Methodiſm* is to the ſtrength of this, of which it ſtands in awe [c].

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The next mark of celeſtial wiſdom is its being *gentle and eaſy to be intreated:* That is, neither a rigid reprover of the indifferent Manners of others, nor obſtinately tenacious of its own: but as far as truth and honeſty will permit, compliant

[c] Whoever reads the large accounts of the *ſpiritual ſtate* of the *Regicides* under condemnation (written and publiſhed, at that time, by their friends, in order to make them paſs with the people for Saints and Martyrs) and compares them with the Journals of the *Methodiſts*, will find ſo exact a conformity in the wildneſs of ſentiment and cant of expreſſion upon the ſubjects of faith, grace, regeneration, redemption, *etc.* as may ſatisfy him that they both came from one common ſtock, and were ready, by the ſame cultivation, to have produced the like fruits. All that the difference of times and circumſtances hath effected is only this, to make the Methodiſt an *Apoſtolic independent*, as it made the Independent a *Mahometan Methodiſt*.

and

SERM. 6. and obſequious to all men. The great Apoſtle of the Gentiles fully approves his pretenſions to this *wiſdom* in the character he gives us of his conduct, *in becoming all things to all men that he might gain ſome*[a]; for the truth of which he appeals to thoſe who were beſt acquainted with his life and converſation. But in our inſpired ſectaries the ſcene is different. We find them ſevere condemners of thoſe innocent manners of their fellow citizens, which themſelves have abſtained from on pretence of being leſs profitable and edifying, or perhaps obſtructive to thoſe ideas they have entertained of perfection; and as ſevere exacters of conformity to their own. Such affecters of ſingularity, that a button too much, or an inch of hat-brim too little, will make them abhor the cloathing; and a pretended impropriety in the names of days and months and titles of men, the very language, of their country. In a word, conformity to things indifferent is *bowing the knee to Baal*; and ſcorn of the magiſtrate and contempt of ſociety the *obeying God rather than man.*

Thus by their *fruits ye may know them*[b]. But if the effects lead us to the cauſe, the cauſe ſoon carries us back to the effects: and we ſee God's Grace and Man's Nature ſeverally aſſume their rights throughout the whole progreſs of ancient and modern Saintſhip.

The genial ſpirit of love could breath only *gentleneſs and eaſe to be entreated*; but enthuſiaſm, which is a mere inflammation of the mind, raiſes a tumor, whoſe ſymptoms are ſtubbornneſs and obſtinacy. The heaven-touched Heart is af-

[a] 1 Cor. ix. 22. [b] Matth. vii. 16.

fected

fected like the purer metals, which eaſily ſoften, and generouſly run at the touch of the ethereal ray. But the Mind ſelf-heated by its own fiery ſpirit, retains the property of its native earth, and grows harder and more intractable as it burns. SERM 6.

To proceed. St. James, in his deſcription of celeſtial *Wiſdom*, advances, in order, from grace to grace. It is *peaceable*; This is its loweſt quality. It is *gentle and eaſy to be intreated*; This is a further advance in its character. The firſt only implies the not giving others diſpleaſure; the ſecond a readineſs to conſult their ſatisfaction. His next mark riſes ſtill higher: It is, he ſays, *full of mercy and good fruits*. It would have been a poor account of celeſtial wiſdom, that it amounted only to an obſequious ſoftneſs of manners: A diſpoſition little more than the ſhadow or outlines of benevolence, That harmony of the affections, which religion calls CHARITY: and which the Apoſtle, in a beautiful periphraſis, expreſſes by being *full of mercy and good fruits*.

Let us inquire then into the *mercy and good fruits* of modern illumination. Our Saints of every denomination have been always fond of recording their ACTS in *Journals*, and as forward to give theſe journals to the public.

The *mercy* of the ſufferer is patience; as that of the inflicter is forbearance. But what patience are theſe journaliſts ſeen to exerciſe under their real or imaginary injuries? What ſpirit, but of heat and reſentment; of malice and revenge, ready and eager to call down *fire from heaven* on their oppoſers; whom, as the enemies of all godlineſs, they repreſent to us under no other charac-

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ter than that of *Agents for the Devil.* Here, their very ſhew of Charity is an inſult; for to pray for them as reprobates, apoſtates, and *the children of the evil one*, is no other than abuſing and reviling them before the throne of Grace: *Whereas, Angels*, (ſays St. Peter) *which are greater in power and might, bring no railing accuſation againſt them before the Lord*[c].

Their *good fruits* ſpring from the ſame root, and conſiſt in a long detail of all their mighty ſufferings; which they tragically magnify by every impoiſoned circumſtance, and by all the aggravating modes of expreſſion. Very contrary to the behaviour of St. Paul; who, from the ſhort recapitulation of his own perſecutions[d], we are aſſured, underwent more than all their invention can ſuggeſt to them of imaginary injuries. Yet hath St. Paul forborn to indulge us in the ſingle hiſtory of any one, tho' he had ſo many proper occaſions, in his various epiſtles, to record all of them at large.

But Fanatics ſtrive to hide both their malice and vanity in diſtinguiſhing between their own cauſe and *the cauſe of God.* In their own, they confeſs their enemies to be entitled to mercy, and themſelves to be reſtrained within the common bounds of modeſty. In the cauſe of God, all forbearance is impiety. *Curſe ye Meroz, curſe ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof*[e]; all reſerve is ingratitude, for *in God we will boaſt all the day long*[f]. But neither the doctrine of the Goſpel nor the practice of its founder gives room for any ſuch uncharitable diſtinction. A diſtinction inven-

[c] 2 Pet. ii. 11. [d] 2 Cor. xi. 26. [e] Judges v. 23. [f] Pſal. xliv. 8.

ted

ted to encourage fanatics in a preſumptuous *partiality* and *hypocriſy*; which St. James makes the laſt mark of the *wiſdom* which is from below. SERM. 6.

That *from above* being, as he ſaith, *without partiality and without hypocriſy*. The Greek word, ἀδιάκριτος, here tranſlated, *without partiality*, properly ſignifies that ſpecies of impartiality which abſtains from interpreting the misfortunes befalling thoſe whoſe principles or practices we condemn, to a judgment from Heaven. As this forbearance always accompanies the *wiſdom* deſcending *from above*; ſo one ſure mark of the hypocondriac ſpirit under an enthuſiaſtic ferment, is the readineſs to diſpenſe, and the raſhneſs to fling about, the exterminating judgments of God. The JOURNALS of modern fanatics are full of theſe horrible *partialities*. For having ſo often *called down fire from heaven*, the leaſt of their concern is, the being heard. So that when any unhappy accident befalls their oppoſers, they conſider it as *God's owning of their cauſe*; and would think it ingratitude to call it by any other name than a JUDGMENT. As Witches, when a miſchief befalls thoſe they have often curſed, aſcribe it to the avenger of their quarrels, their truſty coadjutor the Devil: for, under the agitations of *wrath and uncharitableneſs*, the fruits of this ſpirit are much the ſame, whether Heaven or Hell be invoked, as the avenger. But that they may learn, which much imports the credit of their Saintſhip, to diſtinguiſh between *rage* and *godly zeal*, they would do well to compare the conduct of the Pſalmiſt with their own. HE, in his zeal againſt impiety, ſays, *I hate them (O God!) that hate*

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thee. I count them mine enemies [a]: the conſequence of which was, to avoid their ways. THEY, in their rage againſt oppoſition, cry out, —*Thou hateſt them that hate me. Thou counteſt them thine enemies*: the conſequecce of which is, to doom them to perdition.

The laſt and concluding mark of earthly wiſdom is *Hypocriſy*. The Heavenly is frank, ſincere, and open; uſing direct and honeſt means for the attainment of a holy purpoſe; avoiding all obliquities, and averſe to all diſguiſements. But the pretences of modern Fanatics, as their *Journals* inform us, are conducted on other principles. In accuſing their Enemies, they aggravate the leaſt indiſcretion; in excuſing their friends, they extenuate the worſt prevarications; and, in diſpenſing their own miniſtry, they take advantage of every frantic extravagance of their followers to recommend, to the deluded people, what they call the *power of the word*; betraying, at every ſtep ſo much *Hypocriſy*, that nothing but the vulgar error of the inconſiſtency between KNAVERY and ENTHUSIASM, could keep them in tolerable credit.

Thus have I adventured to tear off the mask from the deformed and enraged viſage of fanaticiſm and ſeduction. The *power of Religion* hath enabled me; and the intereſts of Religion have excited me to this attempt; nothing more diſcrediting the doctrine of Grace than theſe counterfeit impreſſions of the Spirit of God. For, ſince the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt was no longer in *the ruſhing mighty wind*, but in the *ſmall ſtill*

[a] Pſal. cxxxix. 21, 22.

voice,

voice, licentious men have been but too much inclined to conclude, either that this GRACE was an imaginary power; or that it was no other than that aſſiſtance, which God's *goodneſs*, as diſcoverable by natural light, is ever ready impart to his diſtreſſed and helpleſs creatures: juſt as they would perſuade themſelves that REDEMPTION is no other than that reſtoration to God's favour which his *Mercy*, ſo diſcovered, prepares and lays open to repentant ſinners. SERM. 6.

But the diſcourſe has already proceeded to an unuſual length; and properer place [a] will be found to inquire at large into the peculiar nature of theſe Doctrines: where I truſt, it will be ſeen, That Goſpel GRACE and REDEMPTION are ſpecifically different from any thing that natural religion teaches, as reſulting from the Attributes of the Deity, tho' entirely conſiſtent with what we there diſcover of his Nature.

[a] See *Div. Leg.* Book ix.

SERMON VII.

The Character and Conduct of the Meſſengers of the Goſpel.

MATTH. X. 16.

Behold I ſend you forth as ſheep in the midſt of wolves: Be ye therefore wiſe as ſerpents, and harmleſs as doves.

SERM. 7. SUCH was the direction given by our bleſſed Lord to his Diſciples, when he ſent them out to preach the *glad tidings of the Goſpel.*

The CHARACTER of the chriſtian Miſſion is denoted in theſe words, *Behold I ſend you forth as ſheep:*—And the CONDITION of an unbelieving World in the following, *I ſend you in the midſt of wolves.* Tho' the Faith was to be propagated only by the mild meaſures of perſuaſion, yet even this would provoke the *wolfiſh diſpoſition* of the *powers of darkneſs*, to put in uſe all the iniquitous contrivance of fraud and violence for its ſuppreſſion.

Their provident Maſter, therefore, in the concluding words of my text, delivers them a rule for the innocence and prudence of their own conduct.

duct. *Be ye therefore wiſe as ſerpents and harmleſs as doves.* A direction equally reſpecting their PRIVATE and their PUBLIC Character. Whereby, the firſt might correſpond with the dignity of their office; and the other, with the objects of their care. So that, as men, the HUMAN virtues; as miſſionaries, the SOCIAL are recommended to their practice; and both, under the familiar images of the ſerpent's wiſdom, and the innocence of the dove. SERM. 7.

What theſe *human* virtues are, the alluſion in the figurative EXPRESSION will diſcover: What the *ſocial*, muſt be determined by the occaſion of the PRECEPT.

Be ye therefore (ſays the bleſſed Jeſus) *wiſe as ſerpents and harmleſs as doves.* A direction, conveyed in two proverbial ſayings, whoſe import the Diſciples perfectly underſtood.

The firſt alludes to a vulgar ſuperſtition of the ancient world, which gave credit to certain artiſts, who pretended to the power of rendering ſerpents innoxious by the force of charms, and incantations. The men who traded in this impoſture, in order to hide their frequent miſcarriages, made the people believe that ſome of theſe ſerpents had gotten a trick as good as their own; which was to *ſhut their ears* to their inchantments. This counterplot was as readily believed, as the other's magic power, in an age, when every thing was well received, which excited the hearer's admiration. Hence the proverb of *the deaf adder that ſtoppeth her ears; which refuſeth to hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never ſo ſweetly:*

SERM. 7. by which, Moraliſts would infer the wiſdom and ſafety of abſtaining from unlawful pleaſures.

The ſecond, of being *harmleſs as doves*, alludes to as ancient and as fanciful an error of the Naturaliſts, that *the dove is without a gall*; or, at leaſt, bears it not within [a].

The whole of this monition therefore, to the diſciples in their private character, implies, That they ſhould learn to abſtain from all unlawful, unmanly and intemperate pleaſures; and to ſuppreſs in themſelves all the ſentiments of rage, anger, and revenge. The ſerpent's wiſdom being directed againſt the CONCUPISCIBLE paſſions, as the dove's innocence againſt the IRASCIBLE: and both together make one general precept for the ſubjection of our brutal nature to the rational: in which conſiſts the exerciſe of the *human* virtues.

Could any thing be more harmleſs than this method of propagating religion? Could any thing be more holy than the manners of its propagators? What regard to the rights of men, to the Laws of ſociety, was enjoined to the Offerers of the Goſpel! What neglect of the intereſts of fleſh and blood was required of the Receivers of it! TRUTH was the laſting foundation on which Jeſus erected his Church: and VIRTUE the living principle which was to actuate its members.

Indeed the purity of his intentions and the rectitude of his meaſures are ſo evident from the e-

[a] Ἄνδρα μὴ ἔχοντα χολὴν αὐτοφυᾶς, ἀλλ' ἀφ' ἑτέρου δεχόμενον γράφουσιν [Αἰγυπτιοι] περιστερὰν ζωγραφοῦσιν, ἔχουσαν τὰ ὀπίσθια ὀρθα. ἐν ἐκείνοις γὰρ τὴν χολὴν ἔχει. Horapollinis Hierogl. l. ii. c. 48.

vangelic

vangelic hiſtory of his life and death, that the moſt ſtubborn infidel is ready to clear him of fraudulent impoſture, and to centre all his ſuſpicions in a well-meaning ENTHUSIASM. SERM. 7.

This is the laſt miſerable refuge of obſtinate impiety. And the order of the diſcourſe, which now brings us to conſider the precept of the text, as it reſpects the meſſengers of Jeſus in their PUBLIC CAPACITY, will enable us to expoſe it in all its nakedneſs.

Be ye THEREFORE *wiſe as ſerpents, and harmleſs as doves.* Wherefore? becauſe they were *ſent forth as ſheep in the midſt of wolves*; that is, unarmed and defenceleſs amidſt the *powers of the Prince of this world.* The virtues, recommended to them under their public capacity, were, we ſee, objective to theſe powers; and therefore, of the *ſocial* kind; and conſiſted in prudence and juſtice; as the other, recommended to them in their private capacity, and objective to themſelves were of the *human*; and conſiſted in temperance and forbearance. And here let me obſerve in honour of God's word, (which ſhould be the principal end of all diſcourſes from this place) the mutual connexion and reciprocal influence, which the two parts have on one another. The *human* virtues were to recommend their MISSION; and the *ſocial*, to recommend their PERSONS. But to proceed.

If Jeſus had been an Enthuſiaſt, there was no time when the fanatic ſpirit would ſo forcibly have broken out as at this juncture; the critical juncture of ſending his diſciples abroad to convert the world: An Enthuſiaſt, poſſeſſed with the high glory of pro-

SERM. 7. pagating and eſtabliſhing a new religion, to ariſe and be denominated from himſelf, would have his ſpiritual paſſions kindled and inflamed to their utmoſt bearing, at that important moment of commencing his enterpriſe.

But the words of Jeſus upon this occaſion beſpeak their Author to be perfectly cool, and collected within himſelf. *Behold, I ſend you as ſheep in the midſt of wolves.*

Let us reflect upon them with attention. Tho' I am not altogether of opinion with thoſe who conſider the premonition (to which the words of my text allude) ſo frequently repeated by Jeſus to his followers, of the various perſecution that awaited the profeſſion of his Goſpel, as the cleareſt evidence of his prophetic ſpirit: becauſe I think a common obſerver of the ſtate and genius of the then prevailing ſuperſtitions might eaſily foreſee what would be the early fate of a Religion ſupported by no other powers than thoſe of Reaſon and Grace, when it openly oppoſed its truth and purity to a world ſunk deep in error and corruption. Yet ſo far muſt always be confeſſed, that this ſerious attention to the event would not have made part of the Character of a heated and inflamed Enthuſiaſt. When we find, therefore, the founder of our holy religion calmly attentive to the reception his Doctrine was likely to meet with from the People; and provident of the treatment his Servants were ſure to receive from the Magiſtrate, we muſt needs conclude that he then poſſeſſed himſelf in that dignity of repoſe, under a comprehenſive view of his ſcheme which became

became a great Prophet, ſuperior to all the infirmities as well as chances of humanity. SERM. 7.

But his proviſion for his faithful ſervants did not ſtop at the ſalutary warning here given unto them. When he had hinted at the treatment of the world towards them, *Behold I ſend you forth as ſheep in the midſt of wolves*, de directs what ſhould be their conduct to the world; *Be ye, therefore, wiſe as ſerpents, and harmleſs as doves.* A direction which none under the influence of a fanatic ſpirit would be either forward to give, or fond to ſee obſerved. For religious Enthuſiaſm, as we know by ſad experience, places its chief glory in deſpiſing human prudence, and in violating and trampling upon human peace.

Its two great ſtates or ſtages are the SUFFERINGS and the TRIUMPHS of its deluded Inſtruments. And, in both, this hot and fiery ſpirit fatally hurries them into the moſt miſchievous extremes.

At the new birth of a viſionary Sect, which is generally the ſuffering ſtate of Enthuſiaſm, thoſe under its influence are apt to give great advantages to their oppoſers, and to bring as great diſcredit on themſelves. And all for want of this *wiſdom of the ſerpent*; for want of uſing theſe means of human prudence which both reaſon and nature urge and dictate to us, for the ſupport of our opinions, and for the preſervation of our perſons.

The method Enthuſiaſm chuſes to employ in propagating its tenets is the reverſe to this *wiſdom of the ſerpent*; as we may ſee by comparing the practice of modern Enthuſiaſts with that of the great

SERM. 7. great Apoſtle of the Gentiles; who had formed his conduct on this monition of his Maſter. *He became all things to all men, that he might gain ſome* [b]: They comply in nothing, thro' a viſionary fervour to gain all. St. Paul, with this allegoric picture of *wiſdom* before his eyes, was polite, artful, and inſinuating; always on the watch to take honeſt advantages of every principle, and practice of his adverſaries; in order the more effectually to recommend the Goſpel of Jeſus to their favour [c]. The Fanatic is ſtubborn, rude, poſitive, and overbearing. So far from being diſpoſed to turn the beſt ſide of his adverſaries wrong opinions forward the better to ſet off his own, that he is ever prompt to miſrepreſent their right ones: and abhors the temptation of ſuffering you to be of his Faith; unleſs you expreſs it in his own words, and allow him all his conſequences. And miſtaking the precept of *being at enmity with the world* for an averſion to men as well as principles, he helps forward an unjuſt perſecution from the public, when he ſhould be reconciling particulars to his pretended miſſion.

Nor is his conduct leſs extravagant now it concerns the care of his perſon, than before, in the recommendation of his opinions. Part of the *wiſdom of the ſerpent* conſiſts, as Jeſus elſewhere explains it, in prudently evading the fury of our enemies; ſo that when they perſecute us in one city, we may fly to another [d]; a point of prudence, which St. Paul, on many occaſions, as temperately as ſucceſsfully put in practice [e]. And

[b] 1 Cor. ix. 22. [c] Acts xvii. [d] Matth. x. 23.
[e] Acts ix. 25.—xiv. 6.—xvii. 10.—xxiii. 17.—xxv. 11.

when

when the ſame prudence directed him to withſtand the Magiſtrate's Faſces, it was not as a Teacher of truth, but as a Citizen of Rome [f]. But neither precept nor example is ſufficient to moderate the fervors of fanatic zeal. So that having ſtirred up the people to miſchief, and provoked the magiſtrate to injuſtice, he cloſeth the ſcene, without either the Confeſſor's merit, or his Maſter's paſſport, in ruſhing with preſumptuous confidence on the flames. SERM. 7.

This then being the native hue, and complexion of powerleſs Enthuſiaſm, Is it poſſible to believe, that He who, in the direction of being *wiſe as ſerpents*, diſcredited and condemned all this extravagance of conduct, could himſelf be an impotent Enthuſiaſt?

But let us next ſee the viſage Enthuſiaſm puts on when it is now become triumphant, and has gotten the People in its train. If, in its ſuffering ſtate, it haply wore the face of patience and forbearance, it now ſhews, by the ſudden change of countenance, that it eſteemed them the virtues rather of the time than of the perſon. For when Power hath changed hands, and the magiſtrate is come over to its ſide, it is ever ready to turn the ſame authority againſt others which had been ſo abuſively employed againſt itſelf. And if haply it contents itſelf to ſtay the ſlower iſſue of the more artful and clandeſtine methods of diſcouragement and wholeſome ſeverities, yet if theſe do not ſucceed againſt differing opinions, it falls with the quicker appetite on the more direct and open meaſures of violence and oppreſſion.

[f] Acts xvi. 37. xxii. 25.

Now

SERM. 7. Now the unbeliever will be forced to own, that Jeſus, with only the common proviſion which a great genius can never be without, might fairly foreſee, that a Religion ſo pure, ſo reaſonable, ſo uſeful to mankind, againſt which there was nothing to oppoſe but the abſurdities and miſchiefs of Paganiſm, muſt, by the uſe of common prudence in the propagation of it, notwithſtanding the oppoſition which was as eaſily foreſeen, at length become ſuperior and triumphant. So that an Enthuſiaſt, who had left Inſtructions how his Miniſters ſhould act when that time came, would naturally direct them to exert all their zeal; to demoliſh the high places, to cut down the groves, to ſlay the falſe prophets with the ſword, and to eſtabliſh a perfect uniformity. For there is nothing in which the fanatic ſpirit ſo delights to riot as in the abuſive application of the rules and principles of one of God's diſpenſations, to another, tho' of a genius directly oppoſite.

On the other hand, our ever bleſſed Maſter, who not only foreſaw but predicted the progreſs and ſuperiority of his Goſpel, reſtrains his Miniſters from all ambitious politics, and unjuſt violence, in the ſingle precept of *being harmleſs as doves*. For while they obſerved this rule, and preſerved this character, they could never aim at uſurping on the State, or tyrannizing in the Church: But would leave the Magiſtrate his ſword; would leave the People their conſcience; and be content to remit the religious fate of Kingdoms to the wiſe providence of God; who in his own good time will bring all men to the knowledge of his Truth.

Thus

Thus hath the holy Founder of our Faith dig- SERM. ged up, by the very roots, the whole ſyſtem of Impoſture. He has quelled the wildneſs of the Fanatic in the command to be *wiſe as ſerpents*; he hath checked the ambition of the Enthuſiaſt in the command to be *harmleſs as doves*: ſo that the unbeliever muſt either acquit him of theſe affections, or muſt retract what he ſeemed ſo willing to allow him, the greatneſs of his talents and abilities. For, if we will credit theſe men, The great ſupport of his Character was a well-directed enthuſiaſm: and yet he effectually contrived to damp its influence at that very criſis when an Enthuſiaſt would have let looſe his genius, and given it, the utmoſt force and moment. 7.

It is ſeen, that in this account of a well directed Enthuſiaſm, I have ſuppoſed it to conſiſt of an equal mixture of EXTRAVAGANCE and ART: the firſt betraying itſelf in the ſtruggle, and the laſt in its application of the fruits of victory. And whatever inconſiſtence there may appear to be in this repreſentation, I apprehend the fault lies only in the contradictions of our corrupt nature.

It is commonly indeed ſuppoſed, that the more wild and extravagant a fanatic temper is, the more clear it muſt needs be of all fraud and artifice: But both reaſon and experience are ready to ſhew us our miſtake.

Fanaticiſm is a fire, which heats the mind indeed, but heats without *purifying*. It ſtimulates and ferments all the paſſions; but it rectifies none of them: and thus leaving the appetites unſubdued;

pride,

SERM. 7. pride, vanity, and ambition inſinuate themſelves into the impotent and diſordered mind, under the diſguiſe of purity, holineſs, and perfection. And while they are at work, Religion, which lent them theſe more honeſt appellations, will be ſo far from curbing the owner in the uſe of oblique means, that the ſtrongeſt influence of fanaticiſm will be naturally directed to puſh him upon them, as the beſt inſtruments for the ready introduction of what he calls the *truth*.

Nor does the PHYSICAL ſtate of the Enthuſiaſt's mind give any ſtronger check to fraudulent practice than the MORAL. For when this paſſion or affection hath taken poſſeſſion of a great genius, who, if he chance to have a lively imagination, is as ſubject to its controul as the meaneſt, the violence of his fervours makes him impatient of ſtop or defeat, in what he takes to be the *cauſe of God*; and conſequently, to caſt about for any kind of means to remove or repair it: readily perſuading himſelf, that any means are lawful: And his ſuperior genius will enable him to find them; and when found to improve them to their utmoſt uſe, by all the arts of fraudulent addreſs. Hence, if we examine the hiſtory of mankind, we ſhall ſee, that the Founders of empires and falſe religions, which theſe Artiſts contrived ſhould ſupport one another, were frank Enthuſiaſts: But, at the ſame time, ſufficient maſters of themſelves, to turn, with proper addreſs, that ſpirit which they had catched and communicated, to the advancement of their proper ſchemes. And it is obſervable, that wherever one of theſe perſonated actors was not perfect in both his parts,

parts, he was ſoon hiſſed off the ſtage. The reaſon is evident: it ariſes from the nature of things. Without Enthuaſiaſm, the adventurer could never kindle that fire in his followers which is ſo neceſſary to conſolidate their mutual intereſts: for no one can heartily deceive numbers, who is not firſt of all deceived himſelf; or in other words, ſeen to be in earneſt. But then, on the contrary, when the ſpirit of fanaticiſm is ſufficiently ſpread and inflamed, it can never produce any great or notable iſſue, unleſs the raiſer and directer of the machine be ſo far maſter of himſelf as to be able to turn the point of this powerful inſtrument to the objects of his project, and keep it conſtantly directed to their advancement. SERM. 7.

Indeed (as hath been obſerved above) the ſucceſsful Directors of this Drama have generally exhibited more of art in their latter ſcenes, and more of enthuſiaſm in the former. The reaſon of which too is not leſs evident. Fanaticiſm is a kind of ebullition or critical ferment of the infected mind: which a vigorous nature can work through, and by ſlow degrees be able to caſt off. Hence, hiſtory informs us of ſeveral ſucceſsful Impoſtors who ſet out in all the braze of fanaticiſm, and ended their career in all the depth and ſtillneſs of Politics. A prodigy in our nature; but not the rareſt; and exhibited with ſuperior ſplendor by the famous Ignatius Loiola. This illuſtrious perſon, who verified the obſervation of one that almoſt equalled him in his trade, "that a man never riſes ſo high as when he does not know whither he is going," began his extaſies in the mire; and yet ended with the direction and execution

tion

SERM. 7. tion of Councils, that even in his own life-time, began to give the Law to Chriſtendom.

Amidſt all theſe diſtractions of human reaſon and obliquities of worldly politics, we ſee a ſpiritual Empire ſuddenly ariſe; we mark its progreſs; we trace its extent; we examine its eſtabliſhment; and comparing all its parts with their reference to a whole, we find it in effect to have, what was fancied of old Rome, every eſſential character of eternity. Yet was this ſurpriſing Revolution brought about by means entirely different from thoſe by which all the great changes and eſtabliſhments amongſt mankind have been introduced, I mean FRAUD and FANATICISM. What, then, are we to conclude, but that the Religion of Jeſus is as divine in its origine as it is pure and perfect in its eſſence: and that its Author was as free from all the viſions and obliquities of of Enthuſiaſm as he was replete with all the wiſdom and virtue of Heaven.

SERMON

SERMON VIII.

The Character and Conduct of the Meſſengers of the Goſpel.

MATTH. v. 16.

Let your LIGHT *ſo ſhine before men, that they may ſee your* GOOD WORKS, *and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.*

OUR Bleſſed Saviour, as we may collect from the foregoing chapter, had delivered to his Followers the great Principles of the Goſpel Diſpenſation; which conſiſt in a clearer knowledge of the true God; the loſt and forfeited condition of man; and reſtoration to life and immortality by faith in the Meſſiah. SERM. 8

Having thus taught them what they were to believe, he proceeds in this, and the following chapter, to ſhew them what they were to practiſe; introducing his *Sermon on the Mount* with the words of my text, *Let your light ſo ſhine before men, that they may ſee your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.* As much as to ſay, The uſe you are to make of your ſuperior knowledge is to compleat and recom-

SERM. 8. mend your practice; that, from thence may ariſe what is the legitimate end of all human actions, *Glory to God.*

This is the general ſenſe of the words. But the equity, the importance, the neceſſity of the precept do well deſerve a more particular illuſtration.

It conſiſts of three diſtinct parts.

The firſt is contained in the more general direction of *Letting our light ſhine before men.* By *light* is meant *knowledge*, or the participation of *truth*; and not, as it is commonly underſtood, *good works.* And this appears not only from what hath been juſt obſerved of the diſpoſition of the precept, with regard to what precedes and follows it; but likewiſe from the propriety of the words themſelves, *Let your ſo light ſhine before men, that they may ſee your good works*; for the thing ſeen, and the inſtrument of ſeeing, muſt needs be different. Not to ſpeak of the propiety of the figure, in the word *light* for *knowledge.* For what light is to the eye, that knowledge is to the mind: On which account it is become a metaphor running through all languages, but hath a peculiar grace and energy in the application of my text: The Great Author of our faith being deſcribed by the inſpired men of old under the ſame figure, *That there ſhould come a* STAR *out of Jacob:* wherefore St. John gives him the title of the LIGHT *which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.*

By this *light's ſhining before men* is meant that it ſhould be diffuſive to all, as the nature of light is in itſelf, which ſends out its rays on every ſide around;

around; and that it ſhould be communicated to all, as light is in its uſe and application amongſt men; for as Jeſus ſays in the words preceding my text, *Neither do men light a candle to put it under a buſhel, but on a candleſtick.* SERM. 8.

But rightly to apprehend the reaſon of giving an expreſs precept for the doing what appears ſo natural for his followers to do, and ſo reaſonable that they ſhould do, we muſt conſider the ſtate and condition of Truth at the publication of the Goſpel: where we ſhall find that the ſocieties of the wiſe and learned, in the ſchools of the philoſophers and in the colleges of the prieſts, (from whence iſſued the voluntary and appointed inſtructors of the world) had imbibed, from one another, very inveterate prejudices concerning the communication of truth to the people.

In their ſacred fraternities, partly to hide the weakneſs of the national religion, and partly to preſerve the veneration for, and to increaſe the gain of the prieſthood, every thing was wrapt about with myſtery, and ſhut up within the cloiſters of their temples. The books that contained the doctrine and diſcipline of religion were carefully ſequeſtred from common eyes; and the inquiſitive tempers of the vulgar reſtrained and checked by oracular denunciations againſt prophane curioſity.

The ſame incommunicable ſpirit prevailed in the ſchools of the Philoſophers. Theſe deſpiſed the people as much as the Prieſts impoſed upon them; and ſhaking off their common relation to the groſs body of mankind, they ſoon began to think, the doctrines and ſpeculations of their ſchools were of a nature too excellent to come

SERM. 8. into the markets and aſſemblies of the Vulgar. Hence their ſolemn engagements of ſecrecy; by which they kept their knowledge confined within the limits of their own ſect or profeſſion. Thus ſtood the *Pagan* world with reſpect to Truth.

Amongſt the *Jews*, That great body called the Phariſees, which had all the learning and power of the Sanhedrim in their hands, had likewiſe, in imitation of the gentile colleges of Religion and Learning, formed themſelves into a Sect; and as they had borrowed many Pagan practices and opinions, which had miſerably polluted the Law of Moſes, ſo this, amongſt the reſt, of confining Wiſdom to the walls of the Temple; and *taking away the key of knowledge from their brethren* [a].

Such being the perverſe ſtate of things, it was no wonder that Jeſus ſhould deem it of high importance to the intereſts of Truth, to caution his followers againſt a prejudice that had ſo univerſally infected all the teachers of Philoſophy and Religion.

But there are ſtill further reaſons to inforce this precept: The Chriſtian faith hath its advantages of *ſhining*, and the Teachers of it their obligations to *light it up*, which are no where elſe to be found amongſt all the various ſyſtems of wiſdom or holineſs.

For, 1. The Religion of Jeſus is fit for, and worthy the knowledge and examination of every man. The ſeveral modes of Pagan worſhip, as they compoſed the national religions, were con-

[a] Luke xi. 52.

trived

trived and framed by Lawgivers, in ways that beſt ſerved the ends of their ſeveral ſocieties; ſo that public ſervice, rather than truth, being the object of their inſtitutions, theſe were but badly fitted for popular examination: which, therefore, in conſequence, was forbid. But Jeſus, who had no oblique ends to ſerve, *his kingdom not being of this world*, delivered only pure and exact truth, which will ſtand the ſevereſt teſt, and moſt critical inquiry: And This, which was ſo fit, was, at the ſame time, moſt neceſſary to be communicated to all, as propounding to mankind, *The terms of ſalvation* to be obtained only by *his* Goſpel. Unlike, in this too, to the wiſdom of the ancient Sages, which compriſed only idle and fruitleſs truths, with which the people had no concern; or abſtract and obſcure ſpeculations with which they had no acquaintance.

SERM. 8.

Secondly, The Teachers of this Religion had the higheſt obligations freely to communicate of their knowledge to others. The pretence, on which the ancient maſters of wiſdom juſtified themſelves in a contrary practice, was the coſt and labour they had been at in acquiring knowledge. A long and ſtudious application to letters, in the painful probationary trials of their ſchools: The many and dangerous voyages they had undertaken in ſearch of wiſdom, at their great expence of fortune, eaſe, and health: Theſe gave them, as they thought, an excluſive property in the Truths which they had ſo dearly bought, and ſo often paid for. Whereas the followers of Jeſus had all their divine wiſdom brought home unto them, without coſt or ſearch. Hence it is that

SERM. 8. their Maſter elſewhere tells them, *Freely you have received, freely give* [b]. That is, You can have no pretence to conceal, or ſell, the Knowledge, which was given to you without ſearch or price.

II. But it was not enough for this *light to ſhine before men*; it was not enough for the followers of Jeſus to communicate of their ſaving knowledge to others: it was So to ſhine, that the world might ſee and underſtand the virtues of its enlighteners. And this is the ſecond particular of of the precept. *Let your Light* so *ſhine before men; that they may ſee your good works.* And as before, the PROPERTY of light was alluded to, in the command that it *ſhould ſhine*; ſo here, the USE, that it *ſhould ſo ſhine*. For light is not held forth for the manifeſtation of itſelf; but to illuſtrate ſomething elſe, which men would recommend to public notice.

It is here ſuppoſed, you ſee, that the DOCTRINES of Chriſtianity will lend a *light* to *good works*, whereby they may be better ſeen and underſtood. And this with great reaſon, There are two ways of eſtimating moral actions; either by the merit of the Performer, or by the benefit of the Effects. If by the benefit of their effects, there is no need of knowing the motive of the actor; on which all merit muſt be eſtimated. In ſuch caſe, we only praiſe the action for the good it produceth; or if the actor have any ſhare in the applauſe; as his motives may, for ought we know, be only prepoſſeſſion, habit, or gentleneſs of temper; it is but juſt ſuch commendation as we

[b] Matth. x. 8.

give

give to animals undegenerate, and diſplaying the good qualities of their reſpective ſpecies. But when we would eſtimate *good works* by the merit of the Performer, which is the caſe in queſtion, we are then to know his motives of action. Theſe ariſe out of his principles; and are more or leſs noble as thoſe principles are more or leſs legitimate. Now as the principles, or *light*, of true religion produce the nobleſt motives for *good works*, which are love of God and univerſal benevolence towards man; with great reaſon does the holy Jeſus ſuppoſe, that this *light* will add the higheſt luſtre to CHRISTIAN MORALS; and make them, as he well expreſſes it, *ſeen*; that is, ſeen in their full light and ſplendor. SERM. 8.

By this branch of the precept, again, it was our Maſter's purpoſe to diſcriminate his followers from the Pagan prieſthood; who neither practiſed virtue themſelves, nor taught it as of much avail to the people. If they were but frequent in their temple ſervice, and exact in their ritual ſolemnities, theſe falſe guides aſſured them that the Gods were pleaſed, and they had done their duty.

It was much the ſame with the Jewiſh. The love of God and of their neighbour was forgotten or *made of none effect*, as our Lord tells them, *through their traditions* [c]; and nothing found to ſupply their place, but *new Moons and Sabbaths, faſts and ſolemn aſſemblies* [d]; which had ſo thoroughly uſurped the place of Virtue, as, in time, even to diſpute the very name with it.

III. But we have not yet the full ſenſe of my text. It was not enough that the *light* of Jeſus's followers, *ſhone before men*, and that their *good*

[c] Mark vii. 23. [d] Iſaiah i. 13.

SERM. 8. *works* were *ſeen* by it: They were to be SUCH *good works* as from whence *glory to God* might reſult. *Let your light ſo ſhine before men, that they may ſee your good works, and glorify your Father which is Heaven.* And this is the third and laſt particular of the precept.

It would be the higheſt folly and arrogance, in the reptile, man, to imagine that he, by any of his endeavours, could add to the *glory of God*, with whom eſſentially dwells all power and perfection for evermore. But tho' the pomp of ceremonies, the ſervility of proſtrations, the coſt of ſacrifices, and the dedication of ſumptuous temples, can add nothing to his *glory*; yet is he graciouſly pleaſed, ſo long as we continue ſubject to his Son, and obedient to his laws, to reckon our procuring and advancing our own mutual happineſs, by the exerciſe of *good works*, as the augmentation of his proper *glory*.

But it is not only in the *end*, but in the *means* of procuring human happineſs, that our holy religion hath advantages peculiar to itſelf, for the promotion of *God's glory*. We are taught by this religion, that, of ourſelves, and without the aſſiſtance of Heaven, we can do *no good work*, for that it is the Holy Spirit who directs us *both to will and to do of his own good pleaſure* [a]. God therefore being the immediate giver of this *grace*, all that proceeds from it muſt be placed to his account, and to the augmentation of his *glory*.

Here again will the followers of Jeſus be diſtinguiſhed from all other teachers. The Pagan and Jewiſh prieſthood were, indeed, by their

[a] Philip. ii. 13.

very

very profeſſion, taught, that the *glory* of the Deity was to be their aim. For religion being their employment, and the object of religion, God, they could not but ſee that his *glory* was principally to be regarded. But in the way of doing it they were both equally miſtaken. They placed this *glory*, as we obſerved before, only in the magnificence of their temples, the train of their proceſſions, the awfulneſs of ſacrifice, and the humiliation of expiatory penances. They never ſuſpected that *peace, good will towards men* advanced *glory to God in the higheſt.* SERM. 8.

The Philoſophers were ſtill more in the dark as to this matter. For tho', in one point, they ſaw clearer than the prieſts, that Virtue was infinitely preferable to the pomp of ſolemneſt ſacrifice; yet in cultivating the duties of morality, they were ſo far from thinking of the *glory of God*, that they refined and ſublimated VIRTUE for no other purpoſe than to advance the *glory of man.* Nor could it well be otherwiſe amongſt men, who were ignorant both of the true ground of moral obligation, and of our natural inability to act upon it: from which two principles, rightly derived, *glory to God* moſt eminently reſults. For, firſt, their motives to the practice of virtue were abſurd and illegitimate. One followed it *for the love of fame and reputation*; another, *for the intrinſic beauty of its nature*; a third, *for the benefit of its effects*; a fourth, *for that the laws of his country required it*; a fifth, *for he knew not why:* But none practiſed it on its true principle, *conformity to the will of God* from whence *glory* to him naturally proceeds. Again, They were as much

SERM. 8. much miſtaken in man's ability. They pretended that their SAGE had the whole exerciſe of virtue in his power, by the mere force and rectitude of his own nature, without any aid or aſſiſtance from the Deity. Nay, the *Stoics*, a ſect which, of all others, moſt cultivated the ſcience and practice of morality, were ſo far from ſeeking the aſſiſtance of Heaven, that, with an unparalleled extravagance, they placed their WISE MAN in a rank ſuperior to their GODS, as having in him ſomething of higher ſtrength and fortitude; for that he perſevered in virtue, amidſt a thouſand difficulties and diſcouragements; whereas the virtue of the Gods had no temptations to ſhake it[a]. In a word, ſuch utter ſtrangers were they, in general, both to the nature of God and Man, that Cicero delivering the ſentiments of ancient wiſdom, on this matter, expreſſes himſelf to this effect: "All the commodities of life, ſays he, "are the gift of Heaven, but virtue no man ever "yet thought came from God. For, who ever "returned him thanks, that he was good and "honeſt? And why ſhould he? for virtue is, of "right, our own praiſe, and that in which man "reaſonably GLORIES. This, in ſhort, is the "opinion of all the world, that the goods of "fortune are to be aſked of Heaven, but that "wiſdom is to be had only from ourſelves[z]."

But

[a] Eſt aliquid, quo SAPIENS antecedat Deum. Ille naturæ beneficio, non ſuo ſapiens eſt. *Sen.* Ep. liii.—Ferte fortiter. hoc eſt quo Deum antecedatis. Ille extra patientiam malorum eſt, vos [*Sapientes*] ſupra patientiam. *Idem* Lib. *Quare bonis, etc.*

[z] The whole paſſage is in theſe words: Atque hoc quidem omnes mortales ſic habent, externas commoditates, vineta, ſegetes, oliveta, ubertatem frugum et fructuum, omnem denique commodtatem

But now it will be ſaid, and it is not an objection to be concealed, How is this precept to the Diſciple, to be accommodated to the Maſter's practice? Jeſus directs the Meſſengers of his word to *let their light ſhine before men:* and yet his own was ſo obſcurely diſpenſed, that his followers are ever and anon ſoliciting him to explain his meaning. And his anſwer to them, upon one of theſe occaſions, only increaſes the embarraſs. *Unto you* (ſays he) *it is given to know the Myſtery of the Kingdom of God, but, unto them that are without, all theſe things are done in parables; that ſeeing they may ſee and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not underſtand; leſt at any time they ſhould be converted, and their Sins ſhould be forgiven them*[h]. A penurious diſpenſation of truth is the leaſt offenſive circumſtance in this dreadful account of his commiſſion. The keeping numbers in darkneſs, in order to work their deſtruction, gives but an untoward idea of a divine Meſſenger; and a much worſe of him in particular who, by his own declaration, was ſent *not to deſtroy men's lives but to ſave them*[i], or, SERM. 8.

ditatem proſperitatemque vitæ, à Diis ſe habere: virtutem autem nemo unquam acceptam Deo retulit. Nimirum rectè. Propter virtutem enim jure *laudamur*, et IN VIRTUTE RECTE GLORIAMUR. Quod NON contingeret, ſi id DONUM A DEO, non à nobis haberemus. At Verò aut honoribus aucti, aut re familiari, aut ſi aliud quippiam nacti ſumus fortuiti boni, aut depulimus mali, cùm Diis gratias agimus, tum nihil noſtræ laudi aſſumtum arbitramur. Num quis, quòd bonus vir eſſet, gratias Diis egit unquam? At quòd dives, quòd honoratus, quòd incolumis —— ad rem autem ut redeam, judicium hoc omnium mortalium eſt, fortunam à Deo petendam à SEIPSO ſumendam eſſe SAPIENTIAM. *De Nat. Deor.* l. iii. c. 36.

[h] Mark iv. 11, 12. [i] Luke ix. 56.

as

SERM. 8. as he expreſſes it on an occaſion more to our preſent purpoſe, *to ſave that which was loſt*[k].

I ſhall examine this offenſive circumſtance in the Goſpel diſpenſation, not merely to ſhew the conformity between Jeſus's own practice, and that, which in my text he recommends to his followers; but principally to vindicate the juſtice of the divine conduct towards thoſe, who, it is confeſſed, were the proper objects of his vengeance. And the rather, as this circumſtance is become a ſtumbling-block which licentious men are ever ready to throw in the way of the ſtaggering and the weak ſighted.

In order to do this, we muſt go back to the inſtitution of the Law. This eſtabliſhment, tho' preparatory to the Goſpel, was yet, in order to fit it to the genius of the Jewiſh people, delivered under a carnal cover; which, for the ſake of *what was to come*, the Prophets, from time to time, were ever lifting up; and pointing to the ſpiritual ſubſtance beneath. Notwithſtanding this attention providence to conduct them to their true happineſs, the genius of the people prevailed; and inſtead of ſuffering the SUBJECT diſcloſed by the prophets to erect their minds to heavenly things, They catched at the EXPRESSION to fortify themſelves in their carnal habitudes. In a word, The Jews growing more and more earthly-minded; and with an obſtinacy ſo peculiar to them, that their blindneſs ſeemed to ſpread in proportion to their increaſe of day-light; by ſuch time as the change of the œconomy approached, any cover for truth, even the plaineſt apologue, or moſt obvi-

[k] Matt. xviii. 11.

ous

ous parable. was ſufficient to keep them in that ignorance, into which their paſſions and prejudices had brought them. SERM. 8.

Againſt this hardneſs of heart and groſsneſs of underſtanding, the prophets had long ſtruggled, by all the addreſs of information, by all ſeverity of reproof; till at length every mean of reformation having proved ineffectual; God, in his wiſe providence, thought fit, that thoſe who would not ſuffer him to ſave them ſhould, for a warning to an impious world, have their rejection of the Lord of life predicted by the mouth of his Prophets; and their final deſtruction recorded in their own Oracles.

The time foretold was now come. The Lord of life was ſent to THEM and to all MANKIND. And agreeable to his buſineſs, was his Office and Character. To mankind at large he was primarily a divine Meſſenger; To the Jews, a divine Meſſenger foretold. To prove his miſſion he worked miracles: to prove himſelf the Meſſiah he fulfilled Propheſies. Under the firſt part of his Character *his light ſhone before men* in the manner he recommends it to his followers' imitation: under the latter, it *ſhone* indeed, but ſo as to be ſubſervient and inſtrumental to the evidence ariſing from the marks predicted of their promiſed Deliverer. Now God, by Iſaiah, had ſaid, "Alſo "I heard the voice of the Lord ſaying, Whom "ſhall I ſend and who will go for us? Then ſaid "I, Here am I, ſend me. And he ſaid, Go "and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but un-"derſtand not; and ſee ye indeed, but perceive "not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make

SERM. 8. "make their ears heavy, and ſhut their eyes: "leſt they ſee with their eyes, and hear with "their ears, and underſtand with their heart, and "convert and be healed [l]." From this prophecy, (which the Diſciples might have ſeen was then fulfilling on the Jews [m], in the very mode of communicating the Goſpel to them) our bleſſed Saviour deduceth the proof of his Meſſiah-Character—*Unto you it is given to know the myſteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parable; that ſeeing they might not ſee, and hearing they might not underſtand* [n]. As much as to ſay, Take this mark amongſt others of the truth of my pretenſions: My offers of Salvation, as was foretold, are rejected of my Countrymen; and I have delivered my meſſage to them in ſuch terms, and attended with ſuch circumſtances, as the good providence of God hath foretold; and by foretelling, hath preſcribed the Meſſiah to employ, in order to promote the accompliſhment of his will. So that Jeſus, we ſee, is not here declaring the MODE, in which, as a divine meſſenger, he was to propound God's good will to man: Much leſs is it any intimation of the peculiar GENIUS of the Goſpel; which in one place ſelected it's favourites, and in another doomed the unhappy to perdition: But it is a ſimple aſſertion that the prophetic prediction, or, if you will, God's ſentence, was now fulfilling or executing on the Jews: And that Jeſus, as the inſtrument of it's completion, was indeed the Meſſiah foretold. In a word, he is here ſimply inſtructing his follow-

[l] Iſaiah vi. 8, 9, 10. [m] Matth. xiii. 14. John xii. 39.
[n] Luke viii. 10.

ers

ers in the wiſe and wonderful accompliſhments of Scripture prophecy, concerning the fate of the Jews and the fortunes of their Meſſiah; to convince them of God's righteous dealings, and of the truth of his own miſſion. Let what conſequence ſoever therefore, concerning the divine juſtice, be drawn from this declaration, it concerns not Jeſus, as preacher of the Goſpel; but God himſelf as the giver of the Law. SERM. 8.

We addreſs ourſelves then, with due reverence, to juſtify his ways to man; which we truſt may be done without preſumption or difficulty, where Revelation informs us of the act; and Natural light inſtructs us in the equity and reaſon of it. —"Alſo I heard the voice of the Lord ſaying, "Whom ſhall I ſend and who will go for us? "Then ſaid I, Here am I, ſend me. And he "ſaid, Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, "but underſtand not; and ſee ye indeed, but "perceive not. Make the heart of this people "fat, and make their ears heavy, and ſhut their "eyes: leſt they ſee with their eyes, and hear "with their ears, and underſtand with their "heart, and convert and be healed."

Here, we ſee, the event predicted, is the rejection of the Meſſiah: and tho' we find it ſo predicted as may ſeem to imply it was likewiſe influenced, *leſt they ſee with their eyes*, yet as we are able to give a good account why ſuch terms might be uſed tho' no ſuch influence were exerted, it does not follow that the event was indeed influenced.

First

SERM. 8. First then, we may obſerve, that, had it been the intent of the holy Spirit to impreſs upon the hearer no more than the CERTAINTY of the event, we cannot conceive how this idea could have been conveyed more naturally and elegantly than by words which imply an INFLUENCE, *make the heart of this people fat, etc.* For the human mind being unable to reconcile free-will and preſcience, it can hardly be brought to conſider a future event as any other than a contingency, till the idea of a ſuperior influence be taken in.

Secondly, where the matter revealed concerns God's MORAL GOVERNMENT, the ſubject ſeems to require, that the natural effects of vice ſhould be repreſented as poſitive inflictions, as judicial puniſhment for crimes. Philoſophically ſpeaking, A hardneſs of heart, in the courſe of things, brought on this fatal blindneſs: But, prophetically, The blindneſs is a Puniſhment for their hardneſs of heart; *to them that are without, all theſe things are done in parables, that ſeeing they may ſee and not perceive, etc.*

The ſubject, I ſay, ſeems to require this repreſentation; men being but too apt to conſider the natural iſſue of things, as out of the bounds of moral government; tho' in reality it make a very eſſential part: for what ſuch men call the ETERNAL RELATIONS are indeed no other than a DISPOSITION, of God's free appointment; and therefore whatever evil reſults from ſuch diſpoſition, may in a moral ſenſe be truly and properly conſidered as a poſitive infliction.

And

And I am the rather inclined to believe that the prophecy in queſtion is to be underſtood in this ſenſe, when I conſider the conduct both of Jeſus and his apoſtles to this abandoned people. The firſt offer of the Goſpel is made to them: and it is not till their rejection of it, that Jeſus turns to the Gentiles. He took care that his followers ſhould obſerve the ſame conduct. And no reaſonable account, I think, but this, can be given of his ſuffering them to remain ſo long under the deluſion of that groſs prejudice that the offer and benefits of the Goſpel were confined to the race of Abraham. For the conſequence of this was their being ſtrongly driven to try all methods with a people to whom their commiſſion was ſuppoſed both to begin and end. They were ſo driven; and did not leave Judea till forced away by perſecution: and then, the ſame prejudice turned them, firſt of all, to the *diſperſed amongſt the Gentiles* [a].

SERM. 8.

But let us now ſuppoſe this predicted blindneſs to be, what the objectors would have it, a poſitive infliction of evil. If ever there were puniſhments in mercy, this was certainly one of them. We ſee from their whole hiſtory, how morally impoſſible it was that they ſhould be converted by any mere conviction. All their faculties were ſo totally poſſeſſed with ideas of a temporal deliverance, that they would have rejected a ſpiritual dominion even from the hand of God himſelf: as they had before rejected a glorious Theocracy under his own ineffable admi-

[a] John vii. 35.

 niſtration,

SERM. 8. niſtration, for the ſake of a faſhionable Tyranny, like what their neighbours groaned under. Now, in ſo deſperate a condition, the increaſe of light muſt have been the increaſe of condemnation. The greateſt mercy therefore that could have been afforded them was to *make their heart fat, their ears heavy, and to ſhut their eyes.*

But he who will inſiſt that the words, which follow——*leſt they ſee with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and underſtand with their heart, and convert and be healed*——do neceſſarily imply a puniſhment in judgment, rather than in mercy, ſhall not be contended with by me; ſo little reaſon do I think we have to ſtand out, from the apprehenſion of it's impinging on the moral attributes of God. Be it then a puniſhment in judgment.

To ſuppoſe no ſuch for long ſlighted grace, is making the higheſt benefit the cheapeſt and the vileſt: and if we ſuppoſe any, the moſt adequate ſeems to be the loſs of that which had been long, and impiouſly abuſed.

To believe offered ſalvation to be always at hand, after much ſcornful rejection of it, is to diveſt God of his juſtice; and to leave him nothing to exerciſe over man but his mercy. But whenever the concluſions, which we draw concerning God's diſpenſations towards us, from one of his attributes, are made at the expence of another, we may be aſſured that they are falſe becauſe unreaſonable.

Further,

Further, Every covenant of God with man, on the ſyſtem of God's revealed will, is a covenant of grace or favour: Which therefore may be juſtly made (as in fact it is made) with this conditional puniſhment annexed and declared. And what fitter, in the nature of things, than that long and continued inſults on the Giver ſhould be puniſhed by a total deprivation of the gift? SERM. 8.

But laſtly, this part of the great Diſpenſation ſeems, in ſome caſes, to be neceſſary for the ſupport and dignity of God's moral government. If God had nothing to do but to pardon, man would ſoon find nothing to do but to offend.

The two great ſources of human infelicity are PRESUMPTION and PREJUDICES; and theſe we are apt to indulge in all the objects of our WILL and JUDGMENT: the conſequence of which is, our ſo frequent miſcarriages in the purſuits both of HAPPINESS and KNOWLEDGE.

One of the boldeſt inſtances of preſumption is our ſo commonly neglecting the *calls of grace:* ſo that nothing leſs than this awful part of God's diſpenſation, the *ſhutting the door* on thoſe who have long and vilely trifled with it, was ſufficient to give a check to ſo impious a folly.

The impatience of labour, and the violence and allurements of the appetites, are the ſource of all our prejudices and wrong judgments: and while we continue to be miſled by that maſter prejudice, the INNOCENCE OF ERROR, there is little reaſon to expect we ſhould be diſpoſed to bring our

SERM. 8. opinions to a ſtrict account. But this awakening truth, of the puniſhment for abuſed mercy in taking away the means of information, will diſpoſe us to give Religion as early and fair hearing; and make us ſenſible that Error is never innocent while the door of Truth ſtands open before us.

But the beſt proof of God's righteous dealing are the THINGS DONE: and it is only for want of full demonſtration here, that we are forced to have recourſe to any other: It being but to ſupply and ſupport the lower degrees of evidence in the hiſtory of God's diſpenſation, that we reaſon upon the juſtice of them from the nature of things. In all caſes where we have ſenſible demonſtration of the fact, the reaſoning, as is fit, goes the other way; and the juſtice of doing is proved from the thing done. Whether God could caſt off his choſen nation, and keep or leave them in irremediable blindneſs, is to be proved, where the rejection reſts only on moral evidence, from what we know of his nature and attributes. But where this puniſhment, whoſe commencement reſts only on ſuch evidence, is ſtill executing before our eyes, in this caſe, the ſenſible demonſtration of the fact is a better proof of the juſtice of it, than all that metaphyſic reaſoning can ſupply.

This we preſume to be the real caſe of the Jewiſh people. Whenever this dreadful judgment of God, which fell upon them in a national deſtruction, had its beginning; whether at, or before their refuſal of ſalvation from the Lord of life;

life; ſo much at leaſt is certain, that it ſtill continues to operate with unremitted vigour. For, as in civil tribunals, which are wont, in the caſe of more atrocious criminals whoſe death but half ſatisfies the demands of juſtice, to doom the lifeleſs carcaſe to be gibbeted up in terror, and expoſed to the ſight of the ſurvivers, ſo it hath pleaſed eternal Juſtice to act, in its diſpoſition of the remains of this unhappy nation. For tho' their civil and religious policies have been long overthrown and aboliſhed, yet the Name ſurvives, and the Race ſtill exiſts, as diſtinct and ſeparate, and perhaps more unmixed than while they were a Nation. A dreadful diſtinction, and ſupported againſt a thouſand circumſtances which muſt, according to all our rules and experience of human affairs, have long ſince ſwallowed and abſorbed them into the great and undiſtinguiſhable maſs of mankind. The circumſtances, I mean, are ſuch as ariſe from their diſperſion over the whole earth, without proper habitation, country or national connexion. For a fixed abode, as the headquarters of a powerleſs people, ſeems to be a kind of preſervative againſt extinction; and as we are told (by thoſe who would willingly leſſen the miracle of this puniſhment) hath actually kept in being, the *Guebres* and the *Parſis* in ſome retired corners of India. And yet the TEN TRIBES, when doomed to the like deſtruction, found a fixed habitation; who nevertheleſs are abſorded and loſt as if they had never been. Now, tho' the philoſopher and politician will but badly account for this; The religioniſt can reſolve it SERM. 8.

SERM. 8. it with eaſe. He ſays, that God almighty had decreed and foretold that the firſt diſperſion ſhould abſorb the name and memory of the people puniſhed; and that the laſt ſhould preſerve and hold them up, the viſible objects of his preſent vengeance, and of his future mercy.

But then, how are they held up? As the refuſe of the earth, the outcaſt of nations, and the opprobrium of humanity; equally hated and deteſted by all the differing religions and various policies of mankind. For, in order to convey down the juſtice of the ſentence, along with the execution, (ſo wonderful are the ways of God) the VICE of this abandoned people continues to this day, as inſeparable from their perſons, as the puniſhment, it produced upon their race. And avarice, fraud, and a ſavage inhumanity, like an incurable leproſy, as effectually diſtinguiſh their obduracy from the ſhifting follies of mankind, as does the adherence to their rabbinical ſuperſtitions.

To reſume then, and to conclude with the main queſtion, which led us into this inquiry, The conſiſtency between the openneſs and evidence recommended by Jeſus to his followers; and the parables and dark ſpeeches delivered by himſelf.

We preſume, it now appears, that there is a perfect harmony and agreement between the precept and the example: that the firſt is declarative of the eſſential genius of the Goſpel; the ſecond only an occaſional appeal to the evidence of Jeſus's Meſſiah-character: and conſequently,

ſequently, which is the inference to be drawn from both, that throughout the courſe of Chriſt's miniſtry, every thing, as well what was kept back from ſome, as what was clearly and fully revealed to others, equally tended to the advancement of God's GLORY, and the GOOD of mankind. SERM. 8.

FINIS.

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